A MISSIOLOGICAL MOTIF FOR REPRODUCING NEW TESTAMENT
COMMUNITIES IN A POSTMODERN SETTING

A THESIS

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BY
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To my wife Amanda, who has provided great encouragement

to fulfill this dream and to my three beautiful children who have

grown up watching me struggle through the process.

Thank you for your support

"Consider your origin; you were not born to live like brutes,
but to follow virtue and knowledge."

Dante Alighieri

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The project serves as a guide for church planters seeking to create structural harmony between orthodoxy and orthopraxy through the identification of missional examples associated with early Christian communities. This work includes five chapters. Chapter one identifies the need for developing a biblical theology for the practice of church planting. This chapter also identifies issues associated with church planting in the current context of North America. Chapter two is a Biblical and historical review of issues associated with the missional movement of reproducing communities of faith. Chapter three is designed to address theological and methodological issues related with the postmodern context. Additional exploration of the mission of the church and a survey of the significance of the house church structure associated with the First Century is also discussed in this section. Chapter four provides a summary of the first three chapters as well as setting the context for Chapter five. In addition, Chapter four provides a summary that includes a discussion of future research. Chapter five is a seminar designed to identify current, missional, and historical issues associated with the practice of starting and reproducing New Testament communities of faith within the postmodern context. The purpose of this seminar is to provide additional training for church planters associated with the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania / South Jersey.

CHAPTER 1

THESIS-PROJECT CONTEXT AND THEOLOGY

Throughout the movement of Christianity, the vision of the Great Commission has inspired the development of many fundamental practices in the church. The task of starting new Christian churches, one of the practices initiating in response to the Great Commission, has received greater attention at various times within the Christian movement. These periods are defined by the Church's focus on evaluating the historical strategies for fulfilling the Great Commission in light of their own cultural and social context in order to produce new, more effective, indigenous churches. We are currently living in a similar period where many church leaders, denominations, and other church planting organizations are re-evaluating the strategy of starting new churches, in many cases specifically focusing on the various challenges associated with our current postmodern culture.

The intent of this paper is to engage the current discussion concerning the practice of starting Christian churches in order to create communities that are indigenous to our emergent culture. Specifically, this paper identifies the missional principles associated with the practice of first century church planting and develops a foundation for incorporating these practices into a contemporary setting. The desire that fuels this paper is the belief that the Great Commission work is better understood, embraced and experienced in the current cultural context. In order for this goal to be achieved "…we must carry out our task… and develop a strategy by looking through

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three lenses-the lens of Scripture (the eternal), the lens of history (the past), and the lens of contemporary culture (the present)."[1]

Historically, the practice of starting new indigenous churches has served as a catalyst for much of the evangelistic zeal of Christianity. As with each historical period, the postmodern culture provides unique challenges to the evangelistic strategy of church planting. This thesis identifies biblical foundations and successful strategies for the practice of church planting in a postmodern setting while seeking to discover cultural characteristics of postmodern generations that create challenges for current methods of church planting. As a final product this thesis will establish a biblical motif for church planting that resonates with postmodern generations.

In order for this evangelistic method to remain productive at evangelizing postmodern generations, it is imperative that philosophical strategies related to biblical principles and cultural paradigms remain the essences of the focal point. This study investigates the first century practice of church planting and identifies critical elements that are transferable into a postmodern setting. The proposal of this project is that the historical movement of church planting that developed during the first century has key elements that are important to the continued task of starting new churches. The identification of these key elements will help facilitate the development of a motif for starting indigenous churches in a postmodern setting. A church plant in State College, Pennsylvania called the Journey was created out of, and will be continually assessed by the scriptural, historical, and contemporary information discussed in this thesis.

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[1] Gene A. Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1974), 16.

Research Questions

Additional research components used in this project are cultural immersion, observation, and artifact review. As a result of these methods, this study specifically investigates contemporary strategies of church planting and identifies characteristics of a postmodern culture that present specific challenges to the methods that are often used by denominations and other church planting organizations. The research questions to be addressed include the following:

1. What are the primary scripture passages and First Century examples that promote the missional vision of church planting as an effective strategy for evangelism?

2. What are the missional imperatives of the First Century Church?

3. What are the New Testament strategies utilized for starting churches?

4. What are the essential leadership characteristics of a missional church planter in a postmodern setting?

5. What are the critical components of a post-denominational culture that a church planter in a postmodern society should identify and address in their ministry?

6. What are the missional components of the First Century Church that transfer into a post-denominational setting for church planters?

Church Planting

When seeking to better understand the scriptural, historical, and contemporary components of church planting, it is imperative to realize the various elements

associated with this great call. As Malphurs explains, "Church planting is an exhausting but exciting venture of faith that involves the planned process of beginning and growing new local churches."[2] Unfortunately one sliver of church life viewed within the lenses of contemporary culture is the picture of a missionless church establishing minimal impact for the advancement of God's Kingdom.

The goal of each new start should focus on Great Commission work. Therefore the effectiveness of every church plant should seek answers concerning its existence by considering the task of the Great Commission. The duty of church planting is not simply to start a new work nor is the ultimate goal numerical growth. When Jesus communicated his vision to the disciples he created an icon of missional living that penetrates the core of the gathered community, formulating a contagious lifestyle that is possible of reproduction. This picture of the church creates an image of a covenant community who place their faith in Christ going, as Gibbs states, "into the world with the same degree of dependence as Jesus demonstrated toward his heavenly Father, and also with humility and repentance in communicating its message."[3]

<center>The Historical Movement</center>

The historical movement of church planting may never have been fully realized without the full instructions that Jesus communicated to his disciples prior to the end of his earthly ministry. "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all

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[2] Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1992), 26.
[3] Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 41.

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am

with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matt 28:18-20).[4]

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry his followers witnessed a life lived in the

reality of God's Kingdom. The life that Jesus modeled would eventually serve as the

basis for life within this new covenant community. In addition, the mission for this

historical movement specifically provided clarity and overall purpose. As Mohr and

Siebeck recognize, it is important to note that this specific instruction develops a new

period in the disciples' mission. Prior to this information their mission was clearly

limited to the people of Israel (Matt10:6). However, in this instruction the disciples

were given a larger destination. The specific instruction to "make disciples of all

nations" encompasses all people; Jews and gentiles. "The mission to the gentiles is

not intended to replace the mission to Israel, but to confirm and expand it to include

all nations."[5]

Obviously, the early disciples were given the responsibility of communicating

this message and carrying out this task within a spiritually hungry world. The core of

their faith that held them together would eventually be explained through the

incarnation of Christ. This small community of disciples outwardly acknowledged

Jesus as their Lord and Master. The special instructions they received and the verbal

proclamation they confessed would eventually lead to a new period that would

incredibly mark the historical movement of Christianity throughout the early

development and into our current world. The essential component that first signified

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[4] All Scripture citations are taken from the NIV unless otherwise noted.
[5] Mohr Siebeck, *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (Tubingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 2000), 54.

the marking of Christianity came in the form of power as promised by the risen Savior.

"So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 1:6-8). According to Neander, "It is because that great event so prefigured and prepared for, was accomplished at the time of the first Pentecost celebrated by the disciples at the Saviour's departure, that this feast is of so great significance, as marking the commencement of the Apostolic Church."[6]

Eventually, within the initial developmental period of Christianity, the primitive movement would experience another notable event. Many of the Jewish counterparts became aggravated and insulted by the core teachings of the first believers and their widespread influence throughout the region. Early attempts of quieting this community failed and many of the Jewish leaders became even more enraged. As a result, these new believers were persecuted for their faith. Stephen, a man identified as an early church leader because he was filled with faith and the Holy Spirit became the first Christian martyr. "Meanwhile, the believers who had fled from Jerusalem during the persecution after Stephen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the Good News, but only to Jews.

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[6] Augustus Neander, *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles* (New York, New York: Sheldon & CO., 1865), 7.

However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to Gentiles about the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:19-20).

With the establishment of a new community at Antioch that took liberty to communicate the central message to the Gentiles, the movement continued the task of "making disciples." It was then that God grafted another Jewish leader into the fold of the Christian community. This new leader eventually came to be known as the apostle Paul. Paul played a significant role in the first century church particularly in the area of developing new churches. As McKechnie illustrates, "In the fourteen years between the Antioch church's sending Barnabas and Paul out to preach in 46 and Paul's arrival in Rome in 60, Paul traveled in Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece and as far round as Illyricum, establishing Christian churches."[7]

Historically, from a sociological perspective, one of the problematic issues associated with the task of starting these new missional communities was the ability to create a movement out of the initial revelation as communicated by Jesus. There are many anthropological issues linked with the development of the Christian church; however, when exploring the missional role connected to the original vision of church planting the task is somewhat synonymous with the activity of evangelism. Towns states, "The Great Commission implies that church planting is the primary method to evangelize the world."[8] Through the method of evangelism the early church was able to communicate the message of Christianity to their world.

The first century Christians seemed to posses an authentic motivation to be involved with telling others the good news they had discovered. Michael Green, in

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[7] Paul McKechnie, *The First Christian Centuries: Perspectives on the Early Church* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 51.
[8] Elmer L. Towns, *Evangelism and Church Growth* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1995), 97.

his book *Evangelism in the Early Church*, asserts that the early Christians were motivated to be involved with the work of evangelism by a sense of gratitude, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of concern.[9] This passion was an important factor that contributed to the seemingly natural growth that occurred during this period. Consequently, some of the contributing growth was energized by the initial purpose of creating new groups of Christian communities. The movement of creating new groups was dynamic, making an incredible impact on its culture. Historically, no other religious movement compares to the initial growth patterns that first century Christianity demonstrated. As Roland Allen explains, the expansion of the first century church was spontaneous:

> This then is what I mean by spontaneous expansion. I mean the expansion which follows the unexhorted and unorganized activity of individual members of the Church explaining to others the Gospel which they have found for themselves; I mean the expansion which follows the irresistible attraction of the Christian Church for men who see its ordered life, and are drawn to it by desire to discover the secret of a life which they instinctively desire to share; I mean also the expansion of the church by the addition of new Churches.[10]

The Current Movement

For years Christian leaders have spoken the vision of God to the community through the movement of local churches. A great task of the church is to remain relevant without compromising the essential historical elements of Christianity. More recently, mainline denominations have recognized the complications of speaking a relevant message in a pluralistic world. One way the church body speaks truth to the local community is through the methodology or practice of doing church. Many of

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[9] Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 2003), 273-299.
[10] Ronald Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (London, England: World Dominion Press, 1956), 10.

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these organizations continue to agonize over issues related to revitalizing existing churches versus investing resources in new church starts. Roberts and Marshall argue, "Very simply, the church began as a movement but ended up as an institution. And because the institutional church has lasted for some 1,500 years, we've grown overly familiar with this way of existing. It's ingrained in us."[11]

Because the method of doing church has become so familiar, many Christian leaders have continued using strategies that are irrelevant and impotent within many segments of society. As an attempt to break through the various challenges related with institutionalized church, many denominations are contributing large amounts of money and establishing creative "think tanks" with the purpose of cultivating leadership that will give applicable insight to the historical practice of church planting. The church planting initiative can provide an additional voice for the Christian movement to a segment of society that currently feels that Christianity is irrelevant.

In addition to cultivating leadership in existing churches, the church planting movement is growing, characterized by denominations starting large numbers of churches as an evangelistic strategy. Increasingly this method of developing new communities is gaining popularity within the Christian leadership subculture. Stetzer states, "The Southern Baptist Convention has committed to plant sixty thousand new churches by the year 2020. Other denominations have adopted similarly aggressive strategies."[12] Many of these leaders recognize the potential for natural growth that is

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[11] Wes Roberts and Glen Marshall, *Reclaiming God's Original Intent for the Church* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 2004), 20.
[12] Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broad and Holmes Publishers, 2003), 4.

associated with new church starts. However, church planting can be a successful

strategy for evangelism not simply because of the existence of a new church, but

more importantly because of key components associated with the new community

that may have been lost in existing communities.

There are many contributing factors necessary for the natural growth that

occurs within a new church start. Characteristics such as a deep-seeded dependence

on God, fresh vision to reach new people, and organic structure are conducive to the

overall vitality of these new communities. When assessing the role of starting new

churches and how valuable they are in the area of reaching people, Peter Wagner

states that church planting is "the single most effective evangelistic methodology

under heaven."[13]

Modern and Postmodern challenges of planting churches

In order to understand the potential significance of the current church planting

movement, it is important to consider the societal implications of the current context.

The world is experiencing change at a rapid rate. One of the most notable changes

within our culture has been the philosophical and societal evolution of modernism

and postmodernism. The modernization of our world began during the enlightenment

period, where people engaged the world with an "enlightened" view of reality. The

enlightenment provided a time when society begins to shift toward science and

reason. It was also during this period that the philosophies of traditional institutions

throughout society were re-examined and ultimately many were rejected. The pursuit

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[13] C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990), 11.

of truth was perceived as something that could be discovered individually. Therefore, the purposes of many historical institutions were no longer regarded from the same perspective. Okholm states, "In the modern project one does not need to rely on particular religious traditions and specific historic communities to know the truth. The human individual's reason can know the ultimate reality and absolute truth that transcends all cultures, all times, and all places. They are just there waiting to be discovered."[14] In the modern world, truth can be discovered by verified scientific examination. One result of scientific verification is that the role of the supernatural is diminished.

The term "postmodern" can be vague and used to describe multiple approaches toward dealing with modernity. There is within the postmodern ontology resurgence toward the pre-modern state. Nevertheless, much of the postmodern premise results in an expression of life that is drastically opposed to many of the modern assumptions. In a postmodern context truth becomes relative based on culture and one's interpretation. The basic components of this worldview affect almost every major aspect of society, as Grenz points out.

> Viewed in the current context, the adjective "postmodern" describes more than an intellectual mood. The postmodern rejection of the focus on rationality characteristic of the modern era finds expression in various dimensions of contemporary society. In recent years, the postmodern ethos has been reflected in many of the traditional vehicles of cultural expression. These include architecture, art and theater. In addition, postmodernism has increasingly become embodied in the broader society. We can detect a shift away from the "modern" toward the "postmodern" in "pop" culture and even in the day-to-day aspects of contemporary life. In this broader sense, "postmodernism" refers to an intellectual mood and an array of cultural

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[14] Dennis L. Okholm, "I Don't Think We're in Kansas Anymore, Toto! Postmodernism in Our Everyday Lives," *Theology Matters* 5, no. 4 (1999): 1-6.

expressions which call into question the ideals, principles and values that lay at the heart of the modern mindset.[15]

Understanding the philosophical and societal dichotomies that exist during this current period is imperative for the task of planting churches. Eddie Gibbs identifies the challenge of successfully "doing church" in this pluralistic society. In some areas like "rural locations and small towns, churches continue to minister in traditional societies, in which they still occupy a central place. In other settings, churches find themselves marginalized by modernity, a mindset represented by self-assertive secular presuppositions that allow no place for the transcendent. In yet other areas, they find themselves grappling with a different set of challenges posed by postmodernity."[16] Much of current church culture finds solidarity within the context of modernism because the majority of Christian churches within western culture were developed out of the modern era. Many churches developed within the modern context find it difficult to relate to the assumptions and questions of a postmodern culture. In addition, many in the postmodern community find it difficult to connect with the structures and systems of many churches established out of a modern context. Therefore, it is imperative that structures and systems are developed within churches that adequately execute the missional call that God has placed before the church. Establishing effective structures and systems that are designed to speak to this generation requires leadership that understands the scriptural, historical, and current responsibilities associated with this task.

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[15] Rogier Bos, "Engaging Our Postmodern Culture: An Interview with Stanley Grenz," (The OOZE, 2002), 1.
[16] Gibbs, 19.

Leadership initiatives of church planters in a postmodern setting

For the purposes of this paper when the author refers to the concept of approaching ministry in a "postmodern" setting, he is not inferring that modernity is no longer in existence and that the assumptions asserted by postmodernism should be fully embraced. The postmodern context and the rules of modernity both continue to have an impact on society. In addition, the postmodern movement does not produce the type of society that the first century followers of Christ envisioned when Jesus described the "Kingdom of God." With each generation it is the churches' responsibility to provide examples of living in community with God and humanity in order to reclaim God's vision for society. In order to accomplish this task the role of Christian leadership becomes essential.

One important purpose of understanding the ministry setting of this current context is for the task of leadership. Leadership is a difficult quality to understand. In their book *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, authors Bennis and Nanus have identified the magnitude of the problem associated with understanding the component of leadership by observing that there are over 850 working definitions for leadership.[17]

In every generation, Christian leadership components are essential for fulfilling the assignment of communicating the message of God to the hearts and minds of a people. The postmodern setting provides unique challenges to this task. For the effective leader in this context, entering a strategy to establish better skill and the understanding of individual gifting is imperative. This leadership initiative fully

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[17] Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York, New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 4.

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recognizes the importance of the Holy Spirit's role both toward the society and the leader; nonetheless the pursuit is to become fully equipped to pass the heart of God to a people who are desperately seeking. The fascination with the spiritual is becoming a notable characteristic of the current culture, making it truly tragic to allow the church to remain ineffective in society due to poor leadership. Therefore, the purpose of this leadership initiative is to identify characteristics of a leader in a postmodern setting that has the ability to relevantly engage and administer the task of the Great Commission.

Bill Easum, who has led conferences and written extensively about Christian leadership, suggests that leaders in a postmodern setting "feel, think, and act differently than leaders of the past. They are gripped by a different view of reality. They see what most people cannot or will not see… Their comments and actions often scare people who have not assumed the mantle of leadership or who lead by control or rules. In every respect, today's leaders are very different from most leaders throughout the history of Christendom."[18] The fundamental gifts, skills, and abilities for the task of starting and leading churches in a postmodern setting are historically consistent; however the task of remaining relevant with each generation requires a focus on reordering and reclaiming these qualities in relation to the philosophical changes and cultural paradigms of society.

In order for the leader in a postmodern setting to effectively lead a missional community it is important to reorder and reclaim the essential gifts, skills, and natural abilities associated with the role of Christian leadership. Many church leaders and denominations in the modern era started and developed churches by providing

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[18] Bill Easum, *Leadership on the Other Side* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, Press, 2000), 31.

physical spaces to observe the historical sacraments and other additional functions associated with church life. Providing these visual locations was an effective strategy, primarily because of trust and respect in the establishment of the historical church. In addition, many phases throughout the modern period people were comfortable seeking answers to spiritual questions through the notable church establishment. Also, during the early phases of modernity Christianity was the primary option available for expression and the development of spiritual life. By the later phase of modernity people were questioning the authenticity of many historical establishments including the Christian church. In addition the development of pluralism provided additional religious options within our western culture.

As Easum also acknowledges, these innovative leaders are not satisfied with the "status quo" of doing church but more importantly they are ready and willing to take an "out of the box" approach toward conventional religious practices. In addition, team focus is an important leadership style that should be cultivated. In a postmodern context often people are reluctant to follow the positional leadership model but rather respond positively under a more relational approach. Within this setting, the Christian leader that has the ability to lead by example and one who is committed to the journey of teamwork is more likely to experience the rewards of moving toward the establishment of a missional community. Having the leadership skills that can keep a team focused while incorporating diversity and the respectability to speak as a final authority requires creative relational intuition.

Another important component of leadership within the establishment of a missional community in a postmodern setting is the significance of spiritual

development. The concept of spiritually developing a life-giving people who serve as

the hands and feet of Christ in the world while growing in deeper levels of faith and

knowledge conveys the very meaning of discipleship. Regardless of weather the

church is functioning in a pre-modern, modern, or postmodern context, one essential

task is to make disciples.

In the modern world, one of the notable obstacles to the systematic

development of the discipleship process can be recognized through the endorsement

of method. Often leaders in this context have promoted the pursuit of methods that

have originated out of the consumer world. The problems associated with these

methods do not solely reside in the specific origin but more importantly much of the

ineffectiveness can be attributed to the administration, implementation, and reliance

on the program. In the book, *Reclaiming God's Original Intent for the Church*,

Roberts and Marshall recognize this dilemma and seek to provide a vision for

Christian leaders in a postmodern setting.

> The role of pastors will be remolded according to a more biblical perspective.
> We'll become postpragmatists, no longer driven by the so-called "proven
> methods" that promise success in the consumer driven church business. After
> we realize that there's more to ministry than finding and employing the proper
> techniques, we'll repent of our reliance on them and learn to rest again in our
> dependence on God. We'll learn to become equippers rather than program
> managers.[19]

Assessment tools for church planters currently used by denominations

As previously stated, within the current church system many people have

recognized the importance of starting churches. Because starting new churches is

often a shared vision between local churches and denominations, leaders have

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[19] Roberts and Marshall, 19.

focused on the art of this important practice.   There are books, seminars, and a large number of websites available on the subject of church planting and these resources are growing in popularity.

As a result of this resurgence, several leaders have acknowledged the importance of developing assessment and training for potential church planters and others involved with the church planting movement. Statistically, denominations vary in success rates when seeking to start churches and many have sought after deeper answers to explain these success factors. Many evangelical denominations have recognized the importance of assessment when seeking a lead church planter. These assessments mainly focus on giftedness and a reliability behavioral factor of the individual planter. The standard used by many assessment centers, churches, and denominations for the past fifteen years has been material developed by Charles Ridley. Ridley specifically focuses on thirteen behavioral characteristics created out of his research that he insists, are important for the task of starting new churches.

The author of this paper has been assessed by assessment centers associated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Conference, and the Evangelical Free Denomination. In addition, the author has also undergone training through the Southern Baptist Convention designed to help facilitate assessments and provide mentoring for church planters. While there are variations between the systems and structures of each denominational assessment, these organizations initially seek to gain a better understanding of the personal call of each potential planter, including all thirteen specific areas relating to individual attitudes, behaviors, and practices of the prospect.

The assessment is an interview varying in length depending on the

organization, and a trained assessor asks the planter several past behavior questions

associated with the following categories:

• Visioning capacity
• Intrinsically motivated
• Creates ownership
• Relates to lost people and non-churched believers
• Spousal cooperation
• Effectively builds relationships
• Committed to church (kingdom) growth
• Responsive to community
• Utilizes giftedness of others
• Flexible and adaptable
• Builds group cohesiveness
• Resilience
• Exercises faith

Assessors also have an opportunity to investigate two additional categories: financial

responsibility and capacity for sociocultural adaptability.[20]

The Ministry Setting

The ministry setting for this thesis is a new church start called the Journey,

located in State College, Pennsylvania. State College is positioned in Centre County

and houses The Pennsylvania State University. The author was invited by the Baptist

General Conference, the Southern Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania – South

Jersey, and Calvary Baptist Church to participate in a multi-organizational church

start. The author was given the opportunity to serve as the lead church planter,

incorporating the vision, values, and mission associated with the new church.

Calvary Baptist Church has served as the mother church providing financial resources

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[20] Charley Ridley, *Assessment Training Level One* (Alpharetta, Georgia: North American Mission Board, SBC), 5.

and lay leaders to provide assistance with the task of starting the church. The Baptist General Conference provided the initial assessment through TeAMerica, a church planter's assessment organization, and provided additional start up funds. The Southern Baptist Resource Network has provided ongoing resources. Both denominations have provided continuous training for the planter, staff, and core team of the Journey.

A Brief History and Structural Overview of the Journey

In May of 2002 the author and his family moved to State College, Pennsylvania from Columbia, South Carolina to join the staff of Calvary Baptist Church as a church planter. Within the first few months the author was given the opportunity by lead pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, to recruit within Calvary potential members of a core team and to highlight specific needs of the daughter community. In addition the author spent a large amount of time recruiting prayer and financial support for the development of the new church. By the end of June, 2002 the author had identified eight potential families and began the process of meeting and praying with these families on a regular basis. A leadership structure was created with some of the emerging leaders with the focus of prayer for the author, and training for each member.

In September 2002, the Journey began meeting on Sunday evenings to host pre- launch meetings. The Sunday evening meetings were designed to provide a place for leadership and core development. Potential leaders and members were given the opportunity to serve through the Pathfinders, a ministry for children in

nursery through fifth grade. Additional opportunities for leadership development were given through set-up, worship team, and teaching team experiences. The Journey continued with the Sunday evening meetings on a regular basis through November 2002.

In January of 2003 the first house church was started with two couples who were not attending the regular Sunday evening meetings. Within the next few months new house churches were created primarily from the group attending the Sunday evening meetings. These house churches were later named Life on Life groups. The Life on Life groups received leadership and oversight by those who had committed to take part with the leadership structure. These house churches started with the initial goal of creating authentic community among the people who associated with the Journey. The leadership placed an emphasis on teaching and creating a network of these house churches to serve in the area of missions and ministry. Other components of these groups included: individual care, worship, eating, fellowship, prayer, and encouragement.

The first employee of the Journey was hired in January of 2003. Stephanie Fort had been part of the core team from the beginning. She had just completed her Masters degree at Penn State focusing on voice performance. Stephanie had provided leadership at the Journey and specifically connected with the missions and outreach focus. When she decided to join the Journey staff, Stephanie became the Social Justice Outreach Director of the Journey. Over the next few months' additional team members in the areas of student ministry, administration, worship and creative arts, and visual arts would also be added to the staff. The majority of the staff came from

the core team, with two staff members connecting to the Journey through relationships of core team members.

The Sunday evening gathering resumed in February 2003 and continued through June 2003. On September 21st 2003, the Journey officially launched as a new church start. A constitution team was created and they worked together for eight months developing the constitution. All members of the core team were incorporated into the Journey as founding members. A membership class was established providing an avenue for recruitment and development of new members. The Journey has continued as a church focusing on the concept of covenant and community living. People identified as members are invited to participate in covenant living. People who are seeking to understand Christianity and further connect with the Journey are identified as community participants.

The primary structure for the Journey is the house churches. The Sunday evening gathering is a celebration of the network of house churches. The outreach for the Journey is organically focused through the missional living of the covenant participants. Within this community diversity is respected as the Journey seeks to connect with multiple age groups, ethnicities, and various axiological views. The essential focus of the Journey is to engage a ministry of reconciliation. The shared component is the desire to connect with God and others throughout the journey of life. For the covenant participants, this is accomplished through real community, spiritual development, missional living, and expanding as a network of house churches.

The Setting of State College and the Pennsylvania State University

According to an organization called City Demographics, State College has a total population of 135,758 people. The median age is twenty nine years old and 91.40% of the population is Anglo.[21] The Pennsylvania State University is a large contributor to the overall population of State College. For the academic year of 2004-2005 The Pennsylvania State University enrolled 41,289 students.[22] Although The Pennsylvania State University offers many academic programs, one of the most popular programs at the University is Business / Marketing. Additionally, the University offers a large selection of Graduate programs covering the spectrum of social and physical sciences. After cultural immersion for three years and continuing, the author can state that the majority of people living in State College place a large value in the pursuit of education. Moreover due to this dominate theme, large size of the University, and lack of regional jobs to support the graduates, State College is a transient community with many people leaving the city after their education is complete.

Project Design and Research Methods

The thesis-project involves biblical study and bibliographic research focusing on the subjects of planting churches in the current postmodern culture. Additional research strategies used in this project are cultural immersion, observation, and artifact review. Specifically, this study investigates issues associated with starting

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[21] Area Connect. Available from http://statecollege.areaconnect.com/statistics.htm. Accessed 17 December 2007.
[22] The Pennsylvania State University. Available from http://www.psu.edu/admissions/ema/RCD112005BdTr.pdf. Accessed 17 December 2007.

new churches in a postmodern setting. Chapter one begins by introducing some of the biblical, historical, and contemporary issues involved with church planting. In addition chapter one includes the intended goals of the thesis-project, and a description of the history and ministry setting of the Journey.

In an effort to build a case for later comparison, chapter two focuses on the First Century practice of church planting and elucidates pertinent information associated with the Biblical and historical. The primary sources of chapter two are scriptural and historical examples. In chapter three, the author addresses the general characteristics of the postmodern culture, as it relates to the practice of church planting. The author engaged with numerous writings and materials seeking to better understand postmodern paradigms that are crucial to the task of starting new churches in a postmodern setting. In the spirit of Getz, after building a biblical and historical motif of church planting as examined through the postmodern cultural lens, the author concludes this thesis with the comparison against this motif, working from the premise that church planting is an effective strategy for evangelizing the postmodern person. Chapter four examines issues associated with the design of this project providing a detailed analysis including purpose and procedures of the content identified in chapter five. In addition chapter four identifies the mission, vision, values, and structure of the First Century church as it relates to the contemporary vision of missional church planting in a postmodern setting. Chapter four also includes a personal summary and additional research interest. Chapter five is a seminar for church planters associated with the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania / South Jersey who are in the entry phase of their new work. These

planters have been assessed using the Riddley assessment. The seminar identifies

missional principles from the Biblical and historical examples of church planting. In

addition chapter five develops a foundation for specifically incorporating these first

century principles into a contemporary setting.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL REVIEW OF MISSIONAL

Missional Context

The previous chapter identified the basic concept of missional within the context of a post-Christian setting. Specifically notable is the relationship between starting new churches within a post-Christian setting and the need to reconsider the development of missional within the current form. Therefore, when investigating the significant role of church planting throughout history, it is imperative to consider the missional concept as it relates to the continued task of launching and multiplying new churches. Discovering the etymology of missional begins a process of reestablishing motive as it pertains to orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Biblical passages and historical examples of early church life provide in-depth accounts for the concept of missional. In addition, the current cultural revitalization of this idea within evangelical circles has offered fresh vision for the role of the redeemed.

Presently, there is much confusion surrounding the concept of missional. In some circles, the notion is considered threatening, while others make assumptions for its meaning. It is important that the current-church culture seeks to rediscover the intrinsic missional movement that was established at the birth of the early church. It is equally important to gain perspective on the current concepts that are being used to describe the term. Therefore, the two areas for consideration are: a clear contemporary explanation of the particular word missional, as well as additional

insights surrounding the origin of this specific concept. This study will elucidate the task of launching and multiplying missional communities in a postmodern context.

Historical Review of Missional

The word *missional* first appeared in the 1907 Oxford English Dictionary and was defined as "related to or connected with a religious mission; missionary."[23] -In the same year, W.G Holmes wrote, "Several prelates whose missional activities brought over whole districts and even nationalities to their creed." In 1976 J.R Nelson wrote "In fairness to John Wesley, it can be presumed that in his self-awareness as a virtually monarchical of the movement he was guided by his missional principles."[24] However, seminary professor Darrell Guder, in his 1988 book *The Church as Missional Community* suggest that his work "must be held accountable, it appears, for the rapid spread of the term *missional* in many circles of discussion dealing with the situation of the church in North America."[25] The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has also connected the term with church and has identified the missional church as "a biblically faithful and culturally-appropriate reproducing community of disciples sent on mission by God to advance his Kingdom among all peoples."[26]

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[23] *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available from http://dictionary.oed.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/.
Accessed 15 December 2007.
[24] William Gordon Holmes, *The Age of Justinian and Theodora: A History of the Sixth Century Ad*,
2nd ed. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1912).
[25] Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Community: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*
(Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1988).
[26] Mike Cogland, *Missional Network Launches in Response to Young Leader Task Force
Recommendations*. Available from
http://www.namb.net/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=9qKILUOzEpH&b=1594373&ct=3298375
Accessed 15 December 2007.

Emergent leaders have added to the discussion by offering characteristics associated with the notion. These traits demonstrated in church life include qualities such as: sent by God as missionaries to their own culture; establishing and developing meaningful relationships; identifying and caring for the needs within the community; every member in the body is called to serve; and passionate obedience to the Holy Spirit. For other leaders the concept of missional is something that leads back to the expressed life of Jesus. The savior of the world is *Missio Dei* to all creation. From this perspective, the church continues to be sent by the Father and empowered by the Spirit for the good of the world. As a result, many churches are re-thinking the concept of service and establishing projects often connected with the role of evangelism that are intended to benefit those outside the community of faith.

When people are first introduced to the term, many assume the responsibility of supporting the work of missions. This has become the missional norm for many associated with American Christianity. Obviously, the responsibility of the church is to promote missions throughout the world. Churches support mission organizations and denominational efforts on a regular basis. For the year 2007, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has a goal of 150 million dollars for foreign missions support. Currently, there are 5,153 people serving the foreign world through this organization. God has blessed this and other organizations that promote the vision of missions to reach the world for the cause of Christ. However, in a world where we have made this important mandate part of the process, many have substituted a program or an activity for a life-style and calling.

The mandate to be missions-minded and to support the foreign field is a worthy

cause and an important component to the overall missional focus. However, due to the apathetic climate of the Western world in relation to Christianity, people are starting to recognize North America itself as a mission field. There are many who find this to be a difficult realization and a challenging task; nevertheless, the church does not have an option:

> Being a missionary is never easy, but when the culture change has taken place in one's own home, it is even more difficult. We are much like Anglos living near Eighth Street (Calle Ocho) in 1959, during the era when locals were overwhelmed by new immigrants. Anglos in south Miami had two choices- think like Cubans and understand how to function in their world or move.[27]

Fortunately, the current culture is reminiscent of the early believers' world during the first century, A.D. We are living in a time in which people continue to ask questions associated with life's purpose and to seek answers to deeper ontological issues. Unfortunately, it has taken a dramatic shift within society to bring many to the realization that the work has always been missional. Leonard Sweet reminds us "the church does not have a mission. …It is God who has a mission, and the missionary of God is the Holy Spirit. The question is whether the mission of God has a church."[28]

Perhaps one of the most important elements associated with providing clarity to the term missional is the correlation between social justice and evangelism. The concept of social justice has been around long before this phrase was first used by a Sicilian priest, Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio, in 1840; however, the expression social justice conveys the idea that it is the responsibility of individuals within society to become advocates and to enact change on the social afflictions of those who

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[27] Stetzer, 131.
[28] Guder, 34-35.

experience injustice. Within contemporary religious circles, the concept of social justice has often been associated with Liberation theology. Conversely, the notion of evangelism has a deep relationship with Fundamentalism. Within this movement, there is a passion to remain true to the fundamentals of the faith, Biblical inerrancy, and the pursuit of a literal interpretation.

Both disciplines, however, provide elements within their teachings that are essential to the premise of missional. In addition, they demonstrate a weakness within the religious culture of America that was established during the Enlightenment period. David Bosch writes about paradigm shifts that are emerging within the theology of missions and provides clarity for the appearance of missional within these two paradigms. Although they represent two different extremes, they tend to reduce church to a place where a plethora of religious events happen. The missional paradigm penetrates these two established dichotomies revealing the beauty of both and presents a holistic ministry where the mission becomes the central work. As a result, the spirit of missional is to recapture the vision of the New Testament community and to capitulate the adherent hearts for a new work within the postmodern context.

The Concept of Missional within the First Century

From the very conception of the early church, it is important to recognize the missional design specifically associated with the primitive church planting movement. Historically these early followers of Christ collectively served as a reminder that God's Kingdom on earth was established through the person of Jesus

Christ. As a result of being sent on mission to proclaim this message, these believers did not construct life into competing segments in which secular and sacred are separated. Likewise, the missional life is composed of a holistic passage in which everything is sacred. Therefore, from a missional perspective, the believers of this initial community of faith understood their lives as the work as opposed to individuals who joined a specific movement. Van Gelder provides a great reminder that "the Spirit creates the church as the body of Christ in the world, and then the church incarnates or enfleshes the continuing work of bringing the peace of Christ into all the cultures of the world."[29]

This missional design is also formative and easily noticed within the network of Christian communities established within twenty-five years following the birth of the first century church movement at Pentecost. Churches were planted in Rome, several cities throughout Samaria, Malta, Sicily, Cyprus, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Crete. Perhaps there were also additional locations for newly formed communities not even identified. In addition, by the end of the first century churches were established in places like Sardis, Laodicia, Smyma, Thyatira, Pergamos, and North Africa. Within the network, a partnership was present that enabled longevity, stability, and successful ministry for many of these communities. Churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome intentionally joined forces with congregations by sending missionaries, praying, and providing financial support.

Identifying the fullness of the missional design expressed in the first century Christian movement ignites interpretive expressions notable for contextualizing

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[29] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 37.

church planting in a post-Christian context. Following a discussion of a few examples of missional church planting within the book of Acts, specific issues associated with beliefs, values, and behaviors of first century Christianity will briefly be explored.

One example of missional church planting within the book of Acts is recorded in chapter 8:4-8:

> Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

The fact that Luke records this account in his narrative is a reminder that early within the primitive movement some of the participants understood and responded in obedience to the command that Jesus gave in Acts 1:8. The larger Acts 8:4-25 narrative identified as the Samarian mission, is the first missional activity recorded that takes place outside the traditional Jerusalem, Judea territory.   The book of Acts provides a historical account of believers engaging the vision of Christ living as salt and light to the nations who eventually proclaim the Christ to the Gentile world. Luke specifically identifies that these relocated believers "preached the word wherever they went." As a result of early believers fleeing Jerusalem due to persecution, Philip the lay evangelist finds opportunity to identify with the religious outcast of Samaria.

The Samaritans, historically from a Jewish perspective, were considered Judaized Gentiles who by the time of the New Testament period had limited association with Jews. The Samaritans had religious customs closely connected with

the Jewish tradition. In addition, it is important to remember within this context the occasionally suppressed relationship that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Jewish attitude toward the Samaritans "was very ambiguous and ambivalent. Some Jews considered them as a hostile people and treated them negatively as social outcast and religious apostates. But others treated them favorably."[30] Several years prior to the Samaritan mission the same author depicts the presences of this attitude in Luke 9 as he details the account of James and John desiring to call fire from heaven upon the non-receptive Samaritans. Jesus responded to their request by rebuking them while continuing the journey to another receptive village.

Notably, there are also many theological differences between first century Jews and the Samaritans of their day. Customarily, the Samaritans accepted the Pentateuch as the inspired and authoritative word of God. For the most part, the Samaritans were conservative monotheists who observed important Jewish laws and the keeping of the Sabbath. In addition, the Samaritans maintained that the center of worship was at Mount Gerizim, while the Jewish worship center presided in Jerusalem. The conversation that Jesus had with the Samaritan woman as recorded in John 4:25 provides insight to the fact that the Samaritans also anticipated a coming Messiah. The Messiah for the Samaritans was a prophet who would reveal the mysteries of God. The Samaritans referred to this coming Messiah as Taheb. The Taheb would come as promised by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. The anticipation of the Samaritans was that the Taheb would ultimately restore worship at Mount Gerizim for the Samaritan people. In addition there also appears to have been many

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[30] V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2006), 4.

charismatic teachers among the Samaritans who claimed gifts of healing,

interpretation and prophecy. According to Solomon Schechter:

> It would seem that this was a time of special excitement. The student of the
> Talmud finds that such marvels as predicting the future, reviving the dead,
> casting out demons, crossing rivers dry-shod, curing the sick by a touch or
> prayer, were the order of the day, and performed by scores of Rabbis. Voices
> from heaven were   often heard, and strange visions were frequently
> beheld.[31]

Specific to the context of Acts 8 and the overall vision of missional church

planting, it is helpful to identify the life and message of the lay evangelist, Philip.

Philip is first introduced in connection with Stephen in Acts 6 as an assistant charged

with the responsibility to oversee the distribution of the food. It is in this context that

he is given the opportunity to minister to some of the specific needs of the newly

formed community. Likewise the apostles were dedicated to prayer and teaching. It

is within this forum of service and receiving instruction from the apostles that the lay

leader Philip must have developed knowledge, skill, and faith for the future work

with the Samaritans. Having fled from the central location of Jerusalem in Acts 8 due

to the persecution and death of Stephen, his fellow servant, Luke is clear that Phillip

headed to his new location to specifically proclaim Christ to the Samaritans: "The

terminology, *ton Xriston*, employed by Luke in context of the Samaritan mission may

mean that the Samaritans would have understood Philip's proclamation of Christ as

the fulfillment of their own messianic hope."[32] In addition, the "proclamation"

identified in this section is generally associated in a similar context as the specific

responsibility of the apostles. In a radical effort, Philip boldly becomes the lay

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[31] Solomon S. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 189.
[32] Samkutty, 155.

evangelist-teacher to a population of people who were not customarily associated

with the normative elements of the Jewish movement.

The precise impact of the events recorded in Acts 8, are not fully known.

From a missional perspective, much of the movement identified with the early

Christianity can be traced to God's surprising activity among the Samaritans:

> It is the Samaritan mission, not the Gentile mission, that primarily marks a decisive turning point in the development of the early church, as the former paves way for the later. Though it is unorganized from a human point of view, it is rooted in the authority of Jesus, commissioned by the risen Lord, confirmed by the descent of the Holy Spirit and sanctioned by the apostolic involvement. It is portrayed as equally valid with the Jewish mission and is organized out of the divine context of persecution and as the fulfillment of the prophetic and eschatological hope of reunion and restoration.[33]

In addition, the church of Samaria had a positive impact on society by joining forces

with the larger Christian community as together they marked history for the cause of

Christ: "The church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace.

It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers, living in

the fear of the Lord." (Acts 9:31; NIV)

Another example of missional church planting within the book of Acts is

identified in the story of the Gentile mission.

> Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Most scholars believe that it was primarily individuals associated with the Hellenistic party as supporters of Stephen who fled during this period. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-24)

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[33] Ibid, 220.

In the pursuit of gaining greater understanding of the missional design associated with the Gentile mission of the first century Christian movement as recorded in Acts 8 and other examples throughout scripture, it is imperative to further explore the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles. Within this historical discussion emerges the issue of proselytism to first century Judaism. At the end of the second millennium BCE, the nation Israel resided in Canaan with resident aliens. These societal cohabiters were recognized and granted protection by the Torah (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 24:22). Due to this close association, many of the aliens were incorporated into the religious communities of the Jews. Isaiah 45:6 reveals to Israel "I will make you a light of the nations so that my salvation may reach the end of the earth." As a result the prophet Isaiah endorsed the proselytizing and acceptance of Gentiles (Isa. 56) and spoke of a future time when additional foreigners will be added to the nation (56:8). New Testament authors also identify Gentile converts prior to the Gentile mission of Acts 8 in Matthew and Acts. (Matt. 23:15; Acts 6:5)

In order for Gentiles to associate with Judaism, there were various requirements connected with the association.

> A gentile who engaged in "judaizing" behavior may have been regarded as a Jew by gentiles, but as a gentile by Jews. A gentile who was accepted as a proselyte by one community may not have been so regarded by another. Nor should we assume that the proselytes of one community were necessarily treated like those of another, because the Jews of antiquity held a wide range of opinions about the degree to which the proselyte became just like the native born.[34]

Some Jewish leaders accepted Gentile association, while others criticized even limited association. For the Jewish leaders who acknowledged Gentile involvement,

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[34] Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *The Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 1 (1989), 13-33.

there primarily existed two levels of association: God-fearers, and Judaizers. Within

these two levels, Gentiles would show respect and connect with Jews in one or more

of the following categories:

> (1) admiring some aspect of Judaism; (2) acknowledging the power of the god
> of the Jews or incorporating him into the pagan pantheon; (3) benefiting the
> Jews or being conspicuously friendly to Jews; (4) practicing some or many of
> the rituals of the Jews; (5) venerating the god of the Jews and denying or
> ignoring the pagan gods; (6) joining the Jewish community; (7) converting to
> Judaism and "becoming a Jew."[35]

The God-fearers did not accept Jewish circumcision, whereas the Judaizers often

identified as proselytes, embraced the Jewish custom. The Jews had three basic

requirements for Gentiles wishing to convert to Judaism: circumcision, baptism, and

the offering of sacrifices.

One of the methods in which Gentiles became acquainted with Jewish laws

and customs was through participation in synagogue life. The term "synagogue"

means "gathering place," and the term originally included two important notions:

simple houses of prayer (beth tefilah) and houses of study (beth midrash). "With

notable exception of the pre-70 Jerusalem Temple, the synagogue encapsulated

Jewish communal life within its walls – the political, liturgical, social, educational,

judicial, and spiritual."[36] Charlesworth adds, during this period the structure of

"synagogues were large rooms in private homes."[37] In addition, synagogue

involvement allowed for a broader range of practical congregational participation

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[35] Ibid, 13-14.

[36] Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 172.

[37] James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 109.

than the typical experience in the Temple.[38] Synagogues provided a natural

environment that also enabled potential Gentile converts deeper exposure to Jewish

life and customs. By the time of Christ, Judaism had established itself as the most

prominent religious movement in the Greco-Roman world. Some estimates range

that as high as twelve percent of the Roman population was Jewish with over one

million Jews in Egypt.[39] The early missionary efforts of Judaism and the structure of

the synagogue, may have contributed greatly to the success of early Christianity.

  Although historically there was religious association with Gentiles into early

forms of Judaism, the specific narrative as recorded in Acts 11 identifies the first

evangelistic efforts specifically targeting the Greek population of Antioch. Barnabas

being sent by the church in Jerusalem is also charged as the first to be involved with

leading the mission of Christ to the Gentile world.   The birth of the Christian church

further established a distinctive transition between the emergences of Christianity and

disassociation with Judaism that primarily occurred at the resurrection of Christ. For

many years these followers did not conceive the notion of a new religion, instead they

believed they would become better Jews by recognizing the Messiah.[40] Although the

complete separation between Judaism and the Jews and Gentiles associated as the

followers of Christ did not occur for several years following, it is important to

recognize the Spirits specific activity among the newly formed group as recorded in

this narrative as a distinctive turning point. One of the factors that enabled the

eventual separation between the two religious movements was the Hellenization of

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[38] Levine, 722.

[39] Green, 23.

[40] Justo L. Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol.
1 (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1984), 31.

the Roman world. At this point the adoption of Greek culture was common throughout the Roman Empire. The emergence of Christianity occurred at the crest of the Hellenization of the Roman world, and this provided expressive language and a common worldview for the Christian message to take root.

The church at Antioch is another example of church planting associated with the early Christian church. Antioch during the First Century has been identified as being one of the top three cities in the World. The other major cities of the day were Rome and Alexander. Antioch was made a Roman colony in 6 B.C. This colony was established to help protect Roman interests in the region. The Roman road *Via Sebaste*, stretched from Ephesus to the Euphrates, and ran through the city of Antioch. The city was multi-cultural mixed with Greeks, Romans, Phrygians, and Jews. As a major city, Antioch was a thriving political center and the capital for the Greeks, and also provided significant trade and commerce activity throughout the region; however, the city was known to be morally corrupt, filled with Gentile pagans. Sexual promiscuity was rampant throughout the community; nevertheless, the time was right for a significant move God to capture the hearts of many through the message of hope and salvation. Up to this point the missional strategy of the early church included promoting the message of Jesus to the Jews and God fearing Gentiles. Antioch provided a fresh experience for the evangelistic thrust that eventually created a new paradigm for much of the early church.

The first mention of Antioch in the New Testament scriptures can be found in Acts 6:5. There the Bible identifies a man called Nicholas who was "a proselyte from Antioch," (Acts 6:5); therefore, he was a Gentile convert to Judaism who derived

from Antioch. As previously mentioned, in this section, Nicholas is chosen with Stephen, Philip, and other emerging leaders to oversee issues associated with the distribution of food. As a result of this association, the established religious leaders of Jerusalem had a personal connection with individuals from the Antioch region.

The next mention of Antioch in the New Testament is found in Act 11:19: Many believers were scattered when they were persecuted after Stephen was killed… Some of these believers were people from Cyprus and Cyrene. When they came to Antioch, they spoke also to the Greeks, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord was helping the believers, and a large group of people believed and turned to the Lord.

This section identifies that those who preached to the Greeks were successful, resulting in large numbers coming to faith in Christ. Interestingly, the official church of Jerusalem received news of the successful efforts of the Gentile mission and decided to investigate the claims by sending Barnabas. The investigator was so impressed with the missional activity that he also decided to stay in the region and support the formative phase of this early church. This is a vital indicator that the people from Cyprus and Cyrene were involved in critical work.

The fact that Barnabas stayed in the region had great effects on the continual growth of this new forming community. As a result Barnabas decided to introduce another leader to the team. Together for a year the leaders Saul and Barnabas committed themselves to the task of teaching "many people" (Acts 11:26) who were new converts to the Christian faith. It is also at this time that Luke the author of Acts indicates that it was Antioch where for the first time the "followers were first called

Christians" (Acts 11:26). According to Cwiekowski, it was the Gentiles who took a Greek translation of the word Messiah, and used the word Christian to indicate the followers of Christ as associated with this term.[41]

Luke continues the narrative of the church at Antioch in Acts 13. In this section it becomes clear that the church had developed multiple leaders, and the leaders provided the church with personal examples of spiritual formation. The first three verses of this chapter indicate that there were prophets and teachers and these leaders were intentional in regards to the practice of worship, prayer, and fasting. During this specific occasion, they experienced an encounter with the Holy Spirit and the specific instruction to release Saul and Barnabas to a new work. Following the encounter, Luke informs his readers that these leaders "placed their hands on them and sent them out" (Acts 13:1-3). This passage provides a primary example of a church embracing the message and the mission. As a result the Christian message made a tremendous impact. Ed Stetzer wrote "the founding of the Antioch church may be the most important moment in church planting history."[42] Resulting from the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the church at Antioch became one of the first missionary sending churches (Acts 13:3).

Missiological Imperatives of the First Century Church

The missional community of the first century world embodied certain imperatives that gave life and meaning to their specific cause. As participants in God's mission, these people faced tremendous obstacles that provided opportunity for

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[41] Frederick J. Cwiekoski, *The Beginnings of the Church* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1988), 86.
[42] Stetzer, 72.

and acknowledgement of God's demonstrated power. They lived with the convicting assurances that God was at work in their lives through the person Jesus, and His message provided hope and freedom. These imperatives were essential for the fruition of their call. In addition, these imperatives gave greater clarity and direction for their purpose. Although not always present, when fully embraced, these imperatives seemed to provoke times of strengthened participation and renewed association of God's activity within the community.

Mission Starts with God

A careful survey of the God's involvement with the first century church serves as a reminder that God is a missionary sending God. God's missionary character was long expressed from the foundation of the earth through the work of creation. God created a world in which humans were given the opportunity to experience unhindered community with the creator. After the great fall of humanity, God's missionary nature was again expressed through the continued work and redemptive act of Jesus Christ.

The first disciple's of Christ personally received the Great Commission as the launching pad for personal involvement with God's Christocentric plan. As a community, many of these early followers properly recognized their existence as the people of God with the responsibility to fully participate in the promotion of God's restorative work. As a result the notion of missional involvement was recognized as the heartbeat and work of God. The formative essences of the missional enterprise within early church life developed from the perspective that "God is a sending God,

with a desire to see humankind and creation reconciled, redeemed and healed."[43]

Frost and Hirsch elaborate upon this point in their book, *The Shaping of Things to Come*: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church.

Although early church theology was very Christocentric, the redemptive plan and continual activity was Theocentric from the perspective that the initiator and sustainer could be found in the trinity. The church therefore was established to embody God's Mission.[44] The term *Missio Dei*, although later established, provides greater clarity to the notion that God is the one who sends participants out to be involved in His mission. The term translated means "God's mission" or "the mission of God." Further explanation of the term points to "God's mission in Christ." The phrase appeared at a conference for the International Missionary Council at Willingen in July of 1952. There the participants were reminded of preeminence of God's mission: "Even the Church is only an instrument in the hands of God. The Church herself is only the outcome of the activity of God who sends and saves."[45]

Ethical Standards Based on Profession of Faith

Historical evidence suggests, that First Century Jews met weekly in private homes on the Sabbath devoting their time to prayer, personal purity, and a shared meal.[46] The metaphoric language of transformation eventually identified the premises for many associated with these meetings. Much of Christian morality was generated

[43] Allen Frost and Robert Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Henderickson Publishers, 2003), 18.
[44] Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 37.
[45] George F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 5.
[46] Howard Clark Kee, *Evolution of the Synagogue* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing Group, 1999), 7.

from the notion of converts. Christianity quickly established the perception that

followers of Christ embraced higher levels of morality as a result of their association

with God as opposed to becoming morally good to earn God's favor. As a result,

"true piety came to be seen as residing in faith and good conduct, over and above

practices; it aimed to mobilize the entire domain of the self in obedience to God's

will."[47] The Torah presents a moral law that eventually early religious leaders used to

develop the framework for the legalistic enterprise of Judaism. The Christian

message presented freedom from the established legalistic laws by placing faith in the

one who overcame the law. Nevertheless, morality within the early Christian

community was expected and represented the continual path of transformation.

     Conversion into the Christian faith was often followed by the obedient act of

baptism. This symbol further identified the message of transformation and serves as a

reminder of the transformational death and resurrection of Christ. "The earliest

documents of the Christian movement, baptism is the ritual most often mentioned,

and it is mentioned most often in paraenetic or hortatory contexts."[48] That is, the

authors used a specific writing style to remind readers of desired behavior. Morality

was expected from those who professed Christ both verbally and through the

symbolic act of baptism. Many believe this custom practiced by the early church

derived from the message of John the Baptist. Regardless of the origins, this practice

was used to initiate converts into the Christian faith. The early practice of baptism

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[47] Gerard Vallee, *The Shaping of Christianity: The History and Literature of Its Formative Centuries* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999), 16.
[48] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (Cumberland, Rhode Island: Yale University Press, 1993), 92.

also became a unifying component for the newly established movement. Both Jewish and Gentile converts submitted to this custom that publicly identified their allegiance.

Salvation Available to all through Christ

The New Testament message exclusively links salvation with Jesus. The conviction of the early followers of Christ was there is no salvation apart from Jesus. Every aspect of the early church is dependent on the belief in the Messiah. The authors of the New Testament also taught that as a result of this salvation, eternal life and peace could only be found in the essential resurrection message of Jesus. The early message that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) also greatly motivated the gentile mission. "A serious problem for the Jewish Christians is mission among non-Jews… How is it possible to offer salvation to non-Jews, Gentiles, who by definition, the enemies of Israel, and who have not accepted the law of God?"[49]

The notion that salvation is available to all was lavished upon the church. This message found traction not in the attitude adjustments or creative strategies of the early church leaders, but more importantly the irresistible nature of God. The story of Cornelius serves as a reminder that God has acted toward all with a heart of great generosity, patience, and grace (Acts 10-11). The early church leader Peter is captured by the heart of God and directed to proclaim salvation and upon acceptance by a Gentile, he is directed to baptize the non-Jewish counterpart. Another indication

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[49] Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 22.

of God's acceptance of the Gentile nation was demonstrated to the early church leaders when the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-46). Later Peter defends his actions to the leaders at Jerusalem and indicates the work was an expression of God (Acts 11:15-17). Upon hearing the news the Jerusalem leaders rejoiced by agreeing, "God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

New Testament Strategies for Starting Churches

When identifying a proper definition of missions as it relates to the church and her work, many have correctly noted that: *Mission is the whole church brining the whole Christ to the whole world.* The actions associated with the first century church embodied this concept. It can be debated whether those instruments of Christ associated with the First Century church identified a specific strategy to accomplish this task or perhaps they simply followed the Holy Spirit without any intentional plan. There is no reliable evidence that the early church leaders developed specific strategies to evangelize their known world. What is clear however is that the historical account presented in the New Testament identifies a cluster of deliberate patterns that routinely enhanced the mission of starting these new churches.

Association with the Synagogue

The synagogue served as an invaluable institution for the development and advancement of the early church. These established communities existed in most every city throughout the Mediterranean world, and obviously predated the rise of Christianity. The synagogue structure was developed out of a Jewish monotheistic

view with association to a strong moral conduct. In addition, the synagogue served as a place for the preservation of the Torah. By the rise of Christianity, the established structure of the synagogue initially permitted missionaries like Paul an open forum and even welcomed opportunities for extended times of teaching.

The historical account in the book of Acts, presents Paul the missionary using the established synagogue as a starting point for proclaiming the message of the Messiah Jesus Christ. The tendency demonstrated by Paul, as he would enter a city, was to first visit the synagogue. The synagogue seemed to be an obvious starting place for the advancement of the Christian message. In addition, Ramsey indicates that by starting at the synagogue, Paul also "was always sure of a good opening for his Gentile mission among the 'God-fearing,' who formed part of his audience in every synagogue."[50] Paul had an open forum with both Jews and Gentiles who were familiar with the Messianic prophecies. As a result of this strategy the nucleus of the early church was formed out of much diversity. For example, in Berea: "Some of the Jews of the synagogue were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women" (Acts 17:4).

Although this great diversity provided moments of great opportunity, this intrinsic variety also provided great challenges. Glimpses of these same challenges were also consistent in almost every Christian community represented throughout the New Testament. The Christian church became a place where Jews were given freedom to maintain their national identity while Gentiles were eventually accepted as a viable member. Together they would be known as 'tertium genus,' 'the third

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[50] William M. Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 15th ed., Mark Wilson (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 26.

nation.' Nevertheless, "Gentiles had to adjust to some Jewish laws, but never became Jews; they had to give up practices connected to their former religion… but remained non-Jews."[51] Through God's great mercy, the purpose behind the missionary strategy of starting new churches is the rebuilding of 'the fallen house of David' resulting in a community where Jews and Gentiles together seek the Lord. (Acts 15:16-18)

Missionary Work

The New Testament is clear about the mandate of mission involvement. Although the Bible never uses the words mission or missionary, it is clear about participation, structure, and even the results of mission's activity. In short, being on "mission" is the very heart of scripture, the pivotal point of salvation, and the foundation of the church. The Messianic role of Christ fully identifies the missionary heart of God and the Great Commission further demonstrates this mission-centered life that is expected of followers. In addition the New Testament presents the formation for much of this mission activity through the structure of the apostolic ministry. The birth of this apostolic purpose began in Jerusalem and extended to the ends of the world. The apostle Paul was a major example in the formation of missions within the life of the early church. However, Paul presents more than just a process for missions, through his actions he demonstrates a lifestyle of commitment to this important cause.

As Paul committed himself to this lifestyle of missions, he was concerned with more than simply traveling from city to city out of personal interest. Indeed Paul was genuinely concerned about the spiritual condition of people. As a result of this

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[51] Jervell, 130-131.

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concern he preached salvation through Christ in every possible situation.

Intrinsically, Paul also understood the importance of godly church development and

its essential role for individual spiritual stability, the changing of cultural paradigms,

and the extension of God's Kingdom through the multiplication of churches.   Life

within this Christian community included personal commitments of love and

individual care, as well as a unified commitment to the ultimate cause of promoting

Christ. In order for the goal to be accomplished Paul recognized the importance of

training and developing local leaders. As a common practice to oversee the formation

of each local ministry, Paul appointed elders. For example, Paul wrote to Timothy

concerning the issue of establishing leaders in the church at Ephesus. Throughout his

writings concerning these leaders, Paul emphases the importance of godly living that

is pure, holy, blameless, and just. (1 Thess. 2:10). Paul recognized that within these

formative communities, local leadership was essential. These leaders provided

through their lifestyle, both protection and preparation. As a protector, Paul referred

to these leaders as shepherds. (Acts 20:28). These leaders were given the

responsibility to "shepherd the flock of God."

As a leader himself, Paul was largely attracted to strategic cities and their role

in the promotion of the gospel. In all of his missionary work, Paul is identified with

13 cities and the majority, were important cities within their region. For Paul, these

strategic cities were hubs that had potential influence over the larger region. Paul

took advantage of this natural system, but his success was not because of the location,

but rater how the location was embraced and nurtured to continue the missionary zeal.

Ronald Allen provides great insight and an imperative word of caution concerning the importance of specific towns and cities in which Paul planted churches:

> St. Paul was less dependent upon these natural advantages than we generally suppose.... Concentrated missions at strategic centers, if they are to win the province must be centers of evangelistic life. In great cities are great prisons as well as great railway stations ... A concentrated mission may be a great prison or a great market. It may be a safe in which all the best intellect of the day is shut up, or it may be a mint from which the coin of new thought is put into circulation.... We are sometimes so enamored with the strategic beauty of a place that we spend our time in fortifying it while the opportunity for a great campaign passes by unheeded or neglected.[52]

Nevertheless, these areas were new territories for the Christian message. Paul made it clear that this was an essential component of his missionary work (Rom. 15:20).

House to House Influence

An in-depth examination of the church planting strategy of the early church also identifies the important role of the implementation and formation of the house church structure. Specifically, the starting of new churches by the apostle Paul was largely dependent on the formative role of individual households. In short, upon arriving in a new location, Paul would seek to identify a site to hold his operation. As new converts began to multiply, often these early homes became the gathering place for the new work. The house church structure of the First Century provided a likely expression for the eventual separation of Christianity and Judaism. During the early Christian gatherings within these homes, distinctive Christian messages were experienced through worship, the common meal, and times of teaching. These important elements established a faith that was contrary to Judaism. The shaping influences of these new communities included implementation of local leadership,

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[52] Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Our's?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmand Publishing Co., 1962), 19-25.

establishment of diverse relationships, and a natural setting for the presentation of the Christian message. Historically it is difficult to escape the fact that "With the exception of such limited use as could be made of the market place and other public areas of the city, the regular setting for both Christian meeting and evangelistic preaching was found in the homes of believers."[53]

Itinerant leaders initially provided leadership of these house-based churches. Major authority resided with the apostolic figures such as James, Peter, and Paul. Throughout this formative period leaders at Jerusalem were also respected as pillars of authority and often provided leadership for the larger community. Eventually residential leaders were established and prominence through influence and authority was also recognized. This important expression came as a result of Paul's leadership. Paul often identified both residential and itinerant leaders as co-workers and labors. To elevate their important role he even bestows titles on these leaders as authorized representatives (1 Cor 16:10-11; 2 Cor 7:5-8). Paul also calls the church at Corinth into submission under the leadership and household of Stephanus because they were the first converts in Achaia, and they had committed their lives to the service of the saints. He reminds the church to submit to others who follow their example (1 Cor 16:15-18). Leadership during this period included a wide range of spiritual gifts as well as social diversity of members. For example Phoebe from the church at Cenchreae is sent to Rome as a *diakonos*, and the church is encouraged to provide assistance because of her great service to others (Rom 16:1-2). Many of the gifts identified in 1 Corinthians 12 are leadership gifts that were exercised in many house

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[53] Floyd V. Filson, "The Significance of the Early House Churches," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58, no. 2 (1939), 106.

church gatherings.

Multiple Christian communities of the First Century world represented a wide range of diversity. Converts entered into Christian communities from all classes of society and from various occupations, excluding specific trades which could or did compromise the Christian faith system: prostitution, racing chariot drivers, actors, priests of a pagan temple, astrologers, sculptors, artisans, and for a while, soldiers.[54] As a result Paul understood the overall dangers of disunity and separation within these house churches.   The framework that Paul was seeking to establish within this diverse and geographically challenged movement was the concept of oneness. The book of Acts and the epistles of Paul identify several people who had established prominent professional positions and became Christians, Cornelius, Luke, Erastus, Lydia, and Sergius Paulus to name a few.[55] In his epistles Paul often used metaphors to identify the great work of God in bringing Jews, Gentiles, men, women, slave and master together. As in Erickson, three of these images are often highlighted as significant Pauline images of the church – "People of God"; "Body of Christ"; and "Temple of the Holy Spirit."[56] The primary criteria for inclusion into this faith community, was oneness with Christ. The church established a distinctive characteristic from Judaism in that Jews were primarily associated with a nation. Within the church, diversity has the potential to experience great unity under the inclusive work established by the authority of Christ (1 Cor 1:10-13). The early

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[54] Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, trans. Lee Woolf (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), 151-152.
[55] William C. Weinrich, "Evangelism in the Early Church," *[online]Concordia Theological Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1991), 68.
[56] Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd Ed. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 1035.

church introduced a new social order of communal life within the world of religion.

Heyns summarized this communal aspect accurately:

> In the Church the believer does not stand alone, nor are those who belong to it merely a loosely knit group of people. Through his integration with others the individual finds safety and the group its collective fellowship. With their common origin and purpose united by the same ties of faith, hope, and love, the believers may rightly be summoned to accept one another as Christ has accepted them, and to do so, not [merely] to strengthen themselves, but to glorify God . . .[57]

The primary mission of the early church was to preach the message of Jesus to every nation. Specifically tied to this task is the activity of evangelism. The First Century church demonstrated great desire to engage the task of evangelism so others could experience peace with God. Milton L. Rudnick writes in his book, *Speaking the Gospel Through the Ages: A History of Evangelism:*

> The early Christians were characterized by a compelling desire to offer others the incomparable blessing they had received through faith in Jesus Christ. What they had was simply too good to keep quiet about, too good to keep to themselves. Certainly part of heir motivation in sharing the Gospel was simply the natural delight related to bringing any kind of good news to others. It is rewarding to put smiles on people's faces and joy into people's hearts. The Good News of Christ, when believed, had that effect. The most prominent and compelling aspect of their motivation to evangelize was a high sense of privilege about this activity.[58]

These early believers were committed to the task and they used every possible means available. One of the systems used during antiquity to spread the message of Jesus was the established avenue of the home.[59] The household structure of the New Testament world served as the center spiritual activity. Regular spiritual experiences within the home of the First Century world included: prayer, breaking of bread,

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[57] John Adam Heyns, *The Church*, trans. D. Roy Briggs (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1980), 49.
[58] Milton L. Rundnick, *Speaking the Gospel through the Ages* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 29.
[59] Green, 223.

spiritual teaching, hospitality, ministering to the sick, and the development of authentic relationships. As new churches developed the participants of the network joined the aggressive strategy of multiplication through evangelism within the home. The house structure of the First Century was a natural environment for the presentation of the Christian message. During the formative process of these Christian communities, new relationships were developed, and existing ties whether familial, kinship, or friendship now became potential recipients of the gospel. The regular gatherings in homes of these early Christian communities provided an intimate setting and a safe environment to explore Christianity.

Conclusion

The term "missional" is a word that has origins with the established church movement of the First Century. Although the word did not appear until 1907, many of the concepts were present in the in the early church movement as recorded in the book of Acts. Within the current American culture there is much confusion concerning the meaning of "missional." As leaders within the church seek to discover formative elements for the multiplication of churches, it is imperative to rediscover the missional abstracts associated with the First Century church.

The intent of this study has been to elucidate the role of church planting. Specifically, the missional role of church planting is evident in the historical context of the early church. Within the current context, it is imperative to rediscover the practice of church planting in light of missions and evangelism. As missionaries, church planters should be intentional about personal involvement in the *Missio Dei*,

seeking to better understand participation in God's mission. The examples expressed

in the New Testament identify participants engaged in the work of God. Christ is the

primary message and the power of the Holy Spirit is the ultimate sustainer of this

important work.

In addition, believers living within the missional paradigm provide living

examples of holistic unity between issues of evangelism and social justice. Like the

early church represented in Acts, believers seek opportunities to serve a hurting world

while demonstrating compassion and concern for the eternal destiny of those who

have no spiritual relationship with Christ. The early church utilized the established

structure of the Jewish synagogue system to continue the advancement of God's

Kingdom. The continued multiplication of these systems provided a network where

orthodoxy and orthopraxy developed an impact that changed the course of the

religious world. The early church demonstrated God's heart for the world by

reaching beyond racial, social, and gender barriers. Ultimately God inhabited hearts,

changed lives, and created a missional focus for those early believers who accepted

the invitation to this new journey. God continues to offer the same invitation to the

Christian community living in this postmodern context. In the spirit of Frost and

Hirsch:

> Mission is not merely an activity of the church. It is the very heartbeat and
> work of God. It is in the very being of God that the basis for the missionary
> enterprise is found. God is a sending God, with a desire to see humankind and
> creation reconciled, redeemed and healed. The missional church, then, is a
> sent church. It is a going church. A movement of God through his people, sent
> to bring healing to a broken world.[60]

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[60] Hirsch, 18.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTEXT

Postmodern Context: Theology and Practice

The previous chapter provides a discussion of the Biblical and Historical development of the missional concept. Specifically, it identifies the elements missional from the First Century as well as issues associated with the concept within the current context. The process of starting and multiplying churches in the current context is much like that in the First Century world. As a result, it is important for the missional church to consider the cultural paradigm shifts that have led to the post-Christian era and understand Christian ministry within this context. In addition, it is equally important to reconsider many of the missional elements, as well as rediscover some essential structural components of *ecclesia* during the formative years of the apostolic age. Therefore, this literary review will begin with a survey of the literature concerning orthodoxy and orthopraxy within the post-Christian society in American culture. Specific to this section is a discussion on shaping ministry and understanding theology in a postmodern setting. The review will then focus on material related to rediscovering the mission of the church and conclude with a focus on the significance of the house church structure within the formative years, providing additional discoveries within the current context.

In their book *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*, authors Grenz and Franke, begin their work by asserting that theology again is in a time of transition. As a result of this multi layered transition, theology should

be understood as fragmented. A natural consequence of this fragmentation is recognized by various distinctions within the conservative and liberal camps: "Today we find significant differences not only between these groups but also within them, differences regarding a host of theological issues, including basic questions about the nature of theology and the theological task."[61]

In the first section, the authors provide a brief description of this theological fragmentation. Ultimately, they suggest that the current theological fragmentation is a result of the failure of the Enlightenment's commitment to foundationalism. It is out of this realization that the authors offer a concise working definition for the role of theology:

> …it is an ongoing, second-order, contextual discipline that engages in critical and constructive reflection on the faith, life, and practices of the Christian community. It's task is the articulation of biblically normed, historically informed, and culturally relevant models of the Christian belief-mosiac for the purpose of assisting the community of Christ's followers in their vocation to live as the people of God in the particular social-historical context in which they are situated.[62]

The second section of the book develops the central proposal of a vision for theology by discussing three important components: scripture, tradition, and culture. Referring to the scriptural construct historically, they claim that both liberals and conservatives have in essence silenced the Bible. By affirming the final authority of scripture, they claim that the Bible is best experienced in community where the voice of the spirit can be clearly discerned. Likewise, the traditional construct has been birthed out of the ancient community and faithfully handed down with the primary responsibility of interpreting every aspect of the Christian faith to the next

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[61] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 2001), 4.
[62] Ibid, 16.

generation. Therefore the traditional construct develops the "Hermeneutical

Trajectory" for theology. From this perspective, tradition provides both stability of

the past and freedom for the future without "elevating it to a position of final

authority because of the ongoing life of the church as it moves toward its

eschatological consummation."[63] For the final construct, -culture, the authors

encourage Christians as theologians to live as students of culture. With this close

association, believers both interpret and understand the cultural ideologies of the

day.

In the final section, Theology's Focal Motifs, the authors engage in a

discussion of the trinity, community, and eschatology. Chapter six, the first chapter

in this section serves as a reminder that Christian theology is a Trinitarian theology.

This focal motif is based in the Trinitarian theology that each part of the Godhead is

identified with a specific role. Seeking to provide clarity within a doctrine that has

often created much confusion, Grenz and Franke identify the various roles as: "the

Father and creation, the Son and reconciliation, the Spirit and salvation, as well as

consummation."[64] Their overall conclusion for this section is that humans are

relational creatures who identify the likeness of this triune God. As a result, chapter

seven argues that true Christian Trinitarian theology is also communitarian. The

notion that theology is communitarian is recognized by the fact that God's ultimate

work is the establishment of community. The final section deals with the ultimate

origins of hope for the follower of Christ. The authors correctly identify the

cumulative relationship between eschatology and theology: "Theology is the

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[63] Ibid, 126.
[64] Ibid, 170.

teaching about the promising God, the God who is bringing creation to an eternal *telos.* In this sense, theology finds its orientation in eschatology."[65] An eschatological theology provides a reminder that the story throughout history is not about humanity, but more importantly, it is a story of God creating and responding with creation. Their final discussion *Eschatological Realism*, is a reminder that theology is future-focused, as participants of God's image seek to actualize the reality of God in a chaotic world. Ultimately, this is the mission of the church, providing clarity through the newly created community.

D.A. Carson in his book, *The Gagging of God*, continues the discussion of practicing sound theology within a chaotic world. He effectively completed his intended goal as stated in his introduction. First, he hearkens Christian minds to develop a critical response to a pluralistic society. Secondly, he outlines many of the important elements that should be included within that response. Primarily, Carson is troubled by many religious voices of the day that completely reject postmodern thought as a modern day reality. Too often the church has countered secular arguments, which are aimed at questioning the authenticity of the movement with incomplete answers. Carson asserts that throughout our culture there has been an emerging awareness of differences among human beings. He constantly reminds his readers that in the western culture, pluralism has not remained outside the churches but has largely become part of our Christian ethos.

As a theologian, Carson seems quiet comfortable at identifying how the rules of hermeneutics and society parallel. As a result, he comes across with a strong argument that identifies the tension between religious orthodoxy and empirical

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[65] Ibid, 252.

pluralism. It is through the eyes of this tension that the various problems of engaging the western pluralistic society are best understood.

The next phase for Carson is to dialogue with various Christian minds in order to bring clarity to this theological chaos. He naturally begins with issues that deal with God's divine revelation. In a society in which truth is understood through the eyes of each individual, it becomes very difficult for individuals to take this blind step of faith. In a practical way, he identifies a major problem that has essentially nullified the Christians claim to the authority of scriptures. In many ways, Carson claims that it is the Christian himself or herself that poses some of the greatest problems. Theologically, he deals with the fallible concept that truth is embodied in the fragments of society. Just because an individual has passionately been shaped by the boundaries of his or her society does not necessarily mean his or her deep passion reveals truth. Many theologians have mistakenly fallen into the trap of using the western culture and the postmodern tools that have developed this pluralistic society to explain Christian truth. Carson's main assertion is that in order to understand God's word as revelation, it takes a divine act of God's Spirit to remove man's "willful incapacity to believe."

Like a prophet from centuries past, Carson rightly makes a strong plea for Christians to resist the temptation of following religious pluralism. The most impressive trait demonstrated within this work is Carson's ability to articulate clear evidence that both secular minds, as well as deeply committed followers of Christ have played apart in "gagging" God. For the believer this concept has clearly been recognized through the practice of speaking on behalf of scripture. In fact, Carson

claims that individuals "pick and choose" various texts to help support theology, and overlook key doctrines that need to be proclaimed to western minds. One such doctrine is the issue of "eternal damnation." There has been a tendency in our society to either overlook, or under emphasize this crucial issue. As a result, many are distant from any urgency to articulate the message of Christ to post-Christian world. The expansion of postmodernism within American society has created tension between orthodoxy and orthopraxy within Christian communities.

Stanley Grenz identifies the development of postmodernism in his book *A Primer on Postmodernism* and provides a creative balance between issues associated with orthodoxy and orthopraxy. This book is a flavorful academic work that presents a tremendous challenge for those who grapple with issues of Christian ministry in a postmodern culture. The introduction clearly states his intended purpose for this primer: "My goal is to provide a foundation for understanding of the postmodern ethos, especially its intellectual orientation."[66] As a result Grenz spends a great deal of time summarizing philosophical components of a postmodern ideology. This book identifies a variety of cultural developments taking place within the post-Christian society of America. In addition, Grenze expresses several opportunities for the advancement of the Christian message throughout society. In the primer, he continually challenges the evangelical movement to recognize the many influences of modernity. Obviously, the close association of evangelicalism with modernity can pose difficult problems for the Christian apologist seeking to ignore the impact of postmodernism.

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[66] Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 16.

Chapters two and three represent some of the most useful information presented in this book. In these sections, Grenze provides a wealth of information dealing with the postmodern mind. Grenze also points to science to exemplify the fact that there is a new set of rules within the world. He has made a cleaver assessment of the scientific dilemma by pointing to the fact "The question is no longer 'Is it true?' but 'What use is it?' And the question of usefulness means either 'Is it stable?' or, in the context of the focus on power, 'Is it efficient?'" Obviously, this assessment of postmodernism, points to the fact that there is a rejection of absolute truth. Other issues embedded in the very core of postmodernism are cultural and emotional conditions. Grenze speaks in a prophetic way to remind his readers of the dangers associated with presenting the gospel out of a modern motif. In short, he reminds his readers "This plurality of worlds marks the postmodern world view."[67]

The challenges in this book are found in chapters four, five, and six. Within these sections Grenze expounds on the philosophical components of modernity and post-modernity. The strength throughout these sections is that Grenze goes a step further than identifying various philosophical assertions; he places these ideas in a historical context. He presents a helpful discussion of these philosophical ideas which ultimately leads to chapter six in which he focuses on three specific critical thinkers who have contributed to the postmodern discussion: Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Richard Rorty.

In chapter seven, Grenze creatively unveils some of the major dilemmas presented to the evangelical community by a postmodern society. He has some good concepts for evangelism to a postmodern world; unfortunately, this is the shortest

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[67] Ibid, 43.

section of his book. Grenze reminds us that the church has the great responsibility to adequately speak the never-changing good news of reconciliation through Christ in a manner that the emerging generation can understand. By nature postmodernism is both nihilistic and atheistic. The church has a great responsibility to present a gospel that is communitarian and less individualistic, and also more discerning and less authoritarian.

Gene Edward Veith has also contributes to issues associated with orthodoxy and orthopraxy within a post-Christian society. In his book, *Postmodern Times: A Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, Veith develops a complete overview of the cause and effect of living in a postmodern society. The book begins with the postmodern premise that there is no absolute truth. Reviewing the postmodern world-view asserts that there is no objective truth, moral values are relative and reality is socially constructed. As a result, the heartbeat of the postmodern guide focuses on a very important question: Can anyone escape the devastating effects of living in a postmodern society? Vieth is not condemning of postmodern thought nor is he a postmodern apologist; rather, the author identifies positive areas within this philosophy, in which the church has opportunity to advance the Christian message.

Unfortunately, Veith asserts that there are many, especially in evangelical communities, who prefer to ignore the reality of postmodernism. While on the other spectrum of the Christian faith, there are also those who cater to postmodernism by embracing many of its philosophies and ideologies into the theological fabric of the Christian faith. The Christian response to many of the postmodern casualties can find hope in the timeless relevance of the Christian message. As a result, Veith announces

to the Christian community that the message of Christ can be conveyed to those living in the chaos of the day. In addition, Vieth gently reminds his readers of the importance of living truth in a postmodern world. The goal should be "live orthodoxy," a faith that is both experiential and grounded in truth, with room for both the feelings and the intellect. At times in church history doctrine has been overemphasized, but that will hardly be a danger in a society whose every tendency is to deny truth altogether.[68]

One of the most helpful features of this contemporary guide is the in-depth analysis of society from a historical perspective. Veith relates the impact of humanism throughout history, tracing its influence back as far as Biblical Christianity. Ironically, however, Veith asserts that humanism is a world-view that is at odds with the postmodernism. Unfortunately, this same postmodern mind also attacks the value of individualism, and personality that is related to humanity. Veith constantly makes the point that within postmodern circles, individuality is demoted to a position that is placed under all other sentiments. While postmodernism has a tendency to demote humanity, it seems to follow these rules as long as individuality is not called into questioned.

Within many Christian communities the promotion of individuality has dictated essential practices associated with ministry. *Rethinking the Church*, by James Emery White, serves as a creative guide for church leaders who struggle with the exhaustive dilemma of making church work in a postmodern society without compromising the theological fabric of the faith. The intent behind this book is what

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[68] Jr. Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Guide to Contemporary Culture* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1994), 220.

makes it successful. It has become evident that much of the church has lost some

very important elements that were central to the First Century. The author contends

that church life experienced in the current culture was derived from the 17th and 19th

century. As a result, the church has lost relevance within the postmodern context.

White repeatedly draws his readers back to this issue:

> There is a pressing need for the church and its leaders to rethink why they do
> what they do the way they do it. In recent years, there has been a tendency to
> break the church down into specialized tasks and programs and then focus on
> trying to improve those various tasks and programs. Rather than rethinking the
> church, we have become engaged in repairing the church. But the problem of
> the church is not a task problem but a process problem.[69]

Perhaps it is because the church has devoted itself to segmenting the task of

evangelism, discipleship, ministry, and worship into specialized programs that

various postmodern ideologies are deeply embedded within the Christian culture. In

addition, when the idea of developing a contemporary church is discussed, there are

those who immediately feel the church is on the verge of becoming secular and

compromising some of the essential components of the faith. Many evangelical

leaders perceive this shift as an intentional move toward Liberalism or even heresy

and therefore compromising the theological truths presented in scripture. White

reminds his readers that the church must be in the world but not of the world. In fact,

as a result of rethinking the church, it has become obvious that seeking cultural

relevance should be the least of concerns. Over the years, an intrinsic danger has

developed which has the potential of reaping enormous casualties. Many are

concerned that the church has become too secular, but perhaps the greatest concern is

that the church has become too religious for the secular world.

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[69] James Emery White, *Rethinking the Church: A Challenge to Creative Redesign in an Age of
Transition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 10.

Cimino and Lattin also explore many aspects of American religion in the new millennium without becoming too religious for the post-Christian society. As a result, their book is designed to evaluate the spiritual mood within the religious melting pot of America. In particular, this book explores three elements of religious life. First, the authors address the various spiritual beliefs throughout America. Secondly, they examine the religious institutions that speak to the religious concerns of Americans. Finally, they evaluate the relationship between religion and society. Their assessment is that America is not only a postmodern society; it is also post-denominational. The emergence of this post-denominational society can be traced to the great divorce between religion and spirituality.

As a result of this divorce, spirituality in America is tailored to fit the individual. Unfortunately, the church has lost much of its influence as a spiritual authority, which has historically played the role of establishing the religious pulse for society. This has developed two extraordinary problems for religious institutions. First, religious seekers no longer turn to the church for answers to the religious questions. In fact, the whole concept of organized religion among spiritual seekers is one of distrust and rigid conformity. For this large population of American culture, their answers are found in the religion section of their local bookstore. It is there where they have the freedom to explore at their own leisure and see no need to involve their lives in a religious institution that seems to have limited ability in connecting spiritually with God.

The second problem posed by this great divorce deals with the population of people that are involved in religious institutions. In many North American churches

there is resistance to a common belief system among laity. As a result, churches are

filled with individuals who hold their own personal belief system. Many Americans

seem to be more concerned with the individual experience than with specific doctrinal

truths that have developed throughout history. This book also considers exposure to

foreign cultures, new doctrines, a greater emphasis on individualism, Generation X,

and an increasing American consumerism as elements influencing not only the

present American religious spectrum but also the future direction of religious life.

Denominations, churches, and sects with strict and uncompromising dogma are on the

rise, both in membership and financially, and liberal congregations are in decline.

Church growth books, seminars, and 'experts' over the past years have

developed a ministry model around the philosophical notion that conveys a distorted

message. The message that many receive is that in order to grow a church in our

western culture, the Christian community must embrace many of the current

contemporary strategies. Robert Webber, in his book *Ancient Future Faith*, brings

forth a stimulating challenge against this message. In fact, Webber reaches beyond

debating church growth models and develops an accurate read on the postmodern

culture. He rightly points out that the post-modern world is longing after something

more than intellectual knowledge within the church. Unfortunately, Webber centers

much of his theory on a personal belief that the church was most pure in the 3rd and

4th century AD.

His focus challenges his readers to rediscover many of the ancient practices

that have been overlooked throughout the Christian faith. These practices are

intrinsic to all of humanity. Having an opportunity to worship and commune with

the God of history provides nourishment to the chaotic soul. Perhaps the strongest argument presented in this book is recognized by the failure of modern day Christianity to accurately articulate our heritage. Webber has demonstrated that this is truly the heart cry of our Western culture.

Mission Context: Rediscovering the Mission of the Church

Mission is a common motif throughout the Biblical narrative that continually motivated the method for proclaiming salvation and strengthened the multiplication of new communities of faith throughout the first century. Roland Allen was a missionary in North China during the early 1900's who devoted discoveries from his personal experience to the development of influential literary works primarily critiquing the practice of missions during the first century. This section focuses on two specific works by Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, and the causes which hinder it.*   Throughout his life, Allen develops specific themes related to the continued relevance of Paul's work within one's own context. As a result, Allen presents a strong passion for the powerful role of the Holy Spirit in the experience of the church and mission. A final component throughout the literary material of Allen, concerns missiological barriers within the contemporary setting that prevent spontaneous expansion.

Target-group outreach is the intentional process whereby churches focus on designing outreach methods for people within a specific interest or age groups. A common practice among new church starts is to specifically focus on the intended target-group. The relevance of this topic also provides particular insight for leaders

of congregations that target members within the postmodern generation. Although

Roland Allen did not use the specific term, the concept of targeting groups, or more

specifically social classes, is an issue that he gave special attention; particularly as the

issues of targeting produces notable success within the early church movement.

Ultimately, Allen reminds his readers that the Apostle Paul's successful church

planting methods received limited influence from any specific social class:

> In these days there is a strong and apparently growing tendency to lay great
> stress on the importance of directing attention to some particular class of
> people in a country which we desire to evangelize. A common explanation of
> the success of St. Paul's preaching in the Four Provinces is that he followed
> this method. It is therefore important to inquire whether there was any special
> class to which he did in fact appeal, and whether the adherents which came to
> him from any special class were sufficiently numerous to justify us in
> rejecting his method, on the ground that that method was used by him under
> such peculiar circumstances, and applied by him only in dealing with converts
> of such special and peculiar character.[70]

Allen asserts that Paul's success did not develop by adopting the practice of

targeting or specifically engage a special class or community of people within his

missionary methods. Dealing with the issue of Paul beginning his presentation in the

Synagogue, Allen argues that the tenure of the ministry in the Synagogue was indeed

short-lived. In addition, he contends that the influence from preaching to the Jews in

the Synagogue produced limited results and created a relatively small following.[71]

Nevertheless, Allen recognized that although the method produced limited numbers,

the "adherents must have been of great importance to the church."[72] Specifically,

these Jewish followers and Gentile converts provided leadership in the area of

morality, public worship, and Old Testament knowledge. However, Allen concluded

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[70] Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Our's?*, 18-19.
[71] Ibid, 19.
[72] Ibid, 21.

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that, "it would appear that St. Paul does not seem to have addressed himself to any particular class."[73]

Although it appears that Allen's primary intention within this section is to dismiss the notion that the overall missionary success came about as a result of those Paul targeted, at times Allen diminishes the idea that throughout his ministry, Paul indeed targeted specific groups. This is an important church planting method that should not be overlooked. In addition, Allen contends that the synagogue connection was limited, yet nevertheless, during their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas at Salamis on Cyprus "proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews." (Acts 13:5) Later when they arrived in Antioch of Pisidia, they preached to the Israelites and God fearers in the synagogue. (Acts:13:14-41) Obviously, an early method of Paul was to start in the synagogue with his fellow Jews. He continued this routine at Beroea (Acts 17:10), Corinth (Acts18:4), and Ephesus (18:19). In addition, Paul eventually abandoned his Jewish call and out of obedience to God, specifically targeted the Gentiles. Galatians 1:15-16 Paul states "But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man."

When considering the reasons for planting churches, Allen provides pivotal insights into the practice. Allen reminds his readers "Paul did not go around simply to convert individuals, but he sought to establish churches from which the light of the Gospel would spread."[74] The focus is one that shifts from individual performance of the leader to the development of leadership and ultimately, community responsibility.

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[73] Ibid, 22.
[74] Ibid, 81.

As a result, a common mistake of leaders throughout Christianity is the nurturing of

dependence upon leadership. In the most delinquent scenario, leaders become the

paid professionals who out of pride and arrogance manifest a greater level of

dependence within their position. In response to this practice Allen is critical. A

primary purpose for leaders is to teach converts to rely upon the strength and

direction of the Holy Spirit.[75] Too often it is the unfortunate practice to develop a

people dependent on the leadership of those appointed to serve the church. The early

church presents a community of believer's mutually dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

This point has profound implications as to the ultimate purpose for the life of a

believer.

Therefore as a leader, Paul recognized his responsibility not in the creation of

converts, but more importantly in the development of missionaries. Throughout the

contemporary setting, this practice identifies a deep relationship with the theology

associated with the "Priesthood of Believers." In order to ignite in the contemporary

setting and fully embrace the methods used by Paul, it is imperative that leaders avoid

hindering the flow of the Spirit. Allen recognized this act as primary to producing

what is often identified within the current context as "missional" churches: "The

facts are these: Paul preached in a place for five or six months and then left behind

him a church, not indeed free from the need of guidance but capable of growth and

expansion."[76]

This overall principle becomes a major extension to the concept of

"spontaneous expansion" as developed by Allen. In order for this principle to occur

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[75] Ibid, 81.
[76] Ibid, 84.

within the life of a congregation, he contends that the missionary must provide

freedom for the native church to spontaneously expand by the Holy Spirit working

through the lives of converts:

> Spontaneous expansion begins with the individual effort of the individual Christian to assist his fellow, when common experience, common difficulties, common toil have first brought the two together. It is this equality and community of experience which makes the one deliver his message in terms which the other can understand, and makes the hearer approach the subject with sympathy and confidence--with sympathy because the common experience makes approach easy and natural, with confidence, because the one is accustomed to understand what the other says and expects to understand him now.[77]

Allen's suggestion is one that presents an authentic community of people

living differently, presenting the Christian life as an alternative basis for life. More

importantly, this new community becomes more than a set of propositional beliefs

presented for individuals to embrace or dismiss. In addition, out of this redeemed

community emerges a powerful apologetic specific for dialogue with the post-modern

culture. There is no truth except that which is expressed in community is a major

premise within the postmodern context. Truth therefore becomes experiential and

may be discovered within an authentic life-changing community.

Participants involved in greater discovery of truth while providing communal

examination exhibit foundational missionary principles for a post-Christian culture.

In times past, participation with mission- involved churches sending people out to a

specific location to be involved with a specific task. However, as a result of the

current context, Christians no longer inhabit a dominant Christian culture, sending

missionaries to un-churched peoples. Within the un-churched, post-Christian culture,

it is imperative that Christians identify the errant neglect and embrace the missional

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[77] Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, 92*.

mandate to live out this primary missionary call. God is triune, and experiences full relational community within his complete nature. The communal mission of the church therefore is represented in her capacity to reflect these communal elements of God to an alienated world. The church is the place where relationships are restored and function in light of the reconciled nature of the trinity.

Ultimately, Allen characterized the notion that the early church had been "established and organized with a world-wide mission for a world-wide work… for every member was potentially a missionary… With the activity of its members it simply grew by multiplying its Bishops."[78] As one involved with the modern missionary movement, Allen recognized a major distinction between the established culture of missionary societies and that of the early church. Within his work, he compares the relationship between missionary societies and the church with the association of marriage and divorce. Allen notes that divorce was permitted because the hardness of humanity and the limitations of obtaining God's ultimate design for the institution of marriage. Therefore he concluded that missionary societies were established because the church had failed to function out of her divine purpose. The modern church has failed to continue multiplying missionaries for the advancement of God's kingdom. The primary prescription to move beyond the hardness into God's ultimate intention is the path of rediscovering the Biblical purpose of the church. Allen states that "missionary societies and missionary boards are permitted because men's conception of the church and their use of her organization are far removed from that which was in the beginning."[79]

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[78] Ibid, 94.
[79] Ibid, 91.

Allen promotes a view of spontaneous expansion that he primarily defends as available throughout the ages. As a result, a main purpose throughout his writings is to identify practical application points within the first century church and translate these initial actions into the emerging culture. The last chapter of *Spontaneous Expansion* supports his intended goal:

> The rapid and wide expansion of the Church in the early centuries was due in the first place mainly to the spontaneous activity of individuals… No one, then, was surprised at the spontaneous efforts of individual Christians to convert others to their Faith. They probably thought it quite natural. Thus as men moved about there were constantly springing up new groups of Christians in different places.[80]

The practical steps offered by Allen center around methods, which align individual responsibility of the leaders to release native or newly converted followers to embrace the work of expanding God's kingdom. In addition, Allen offers continued guidance for individual believers to live as missionaries within their world. He coins this missionary way of living with the Apostolic model as an important activity that early leaders ultimately handed "on to them the organization which she had received from her first founders."[81] Allen also identifies the important of role faith within the life of the missionary. For Allen, these core components are motivated, ignited, and strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit.

An area, however, that often seems ignored within these literary works is the issue of repentance. Certainly, Allen is not opposed to the concept; nevertheless, the crucial display of this action is a primary message throughout first century Christianity. During his ministry, Jesus often spoke of the correlation between repentance and faith: "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and

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[80] Ibid, 80.
[81] Ibid, 81.

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saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe…"
(Mark 1:14-15). In the spiritual life, repentance and faith are the two dynamics of
spiritual combustion that identifies Gods work in our hearts.

If the primary act of faith for Allen serves as a notable action for the
missionary, adding the proclamation and regular practice of repentance to his core
responsibilities would certainly complete Allen's argument. Ultimately, God
transforms individuals into the image of his Son initiated by the act of repentance. In
addition, in order to experience this transforming power, the practice of repentance is
essential. Specific to the context of Acts, the message of repentance is important to
the community of faith, as well as to seekers. The primary message for the early
missionaries was a simple call to repentance.

Structural Context: Rediscovering the Significance of the House Church

Floyd Filson revealed a crucial component concerning the relationship
between ecclesiology and the continually emerging role of orthopraxy within the
Christian faith: "…The New Testament Church would be better understood, if more
attention were paid to the actual physical conditions under which the first Christians
met and lived. In particular, the importance and function of the house church should
be carefully considered."[82] The house church was established as an institution that
contributed significantly to the overall goal of the First Century church. From the
beginning, Christians met in the homes of those associated with the community of
faith. The implications of the house church structure for the early church are
extensive and provide insight into the foundation of primitive practices and the

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[82] Filson, 106.

development of a community. Therefore, to negate the importance of this ancient

institution weakens the pursuit of deconstructing ecclesiology to ascertain sound

orthodoxy and orthopraxy within the current culture.

Acts 1:13 is the first reference that identifies the possible use of a physical

house as a meeting place for the early disciples of the ascended Christ. Acts 2:46 is

often identified as the foundational passage establishing the association of individual

homes as part of the structural component for ecclesia within the First Century. In 1

Corinthians 13, Paul delivers a message to his primary audience by making a

reference to the church that meets in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. The individual

homes of believers were a primary meeting place for group gatherings, which

consisted of teaching and evangelistic preaching. In addition, Act 19:9 provides a

limited reference of Paul and the disciples using the lecture hall of "Tyrannus" as a

regular meeting place for a period of two years. As a result, "all the Jews and Greeks

who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." (Acts 19:10)   These

brief references further support the importance of discovering the magnitude

associated with regular house church gathering of the early church.

Filson provides five specific reasons the house-church structure was important

to the life and mission of the Apostolic Church:

1) *The house church provided a forum for the followers of Jesus to develop a*

distinctive Christian worship and fellowship during the first days of the apostolic age.

The First Century church was not dependent upon the pattern of worship and

fellowship experienced at the Temple. As a result of these early meetings within

individual homes, the church experienced potential opportunities to extend spiritual

blessings to those within their community of faith. As Filson suggests, "it was the

hospitality of these homes which made possible the Christian worship, common

meals, and courage-sustaining fellowship of the group."[83] In addition, essential

components of ecclesia for the First Century followers were not introduced by

primarily attending special events with special buildings culturally associated with

religious life. The house church with adequate space included meals with their

meeting, as well as regular participation in the Eucharist. Naturally, the home

provided a special environment for sacred forms of Christian community and

worship. It is also important to consider that the consistent practice of theology

within the homes of the early believers not only strengthened the community of faith,

but also family relationships. The regular practice of community, worship, and the

Lord's Supper must have provided a forum for families to rediscover God's original

intent.

Within the current culture, individual homes continue to provide a forum for

developing theology through essential experiences gained in the house church. The

home becomes a sanctuary where individuals are blessed and develop through the

establishment of community. The reality of God's sacred presence in various

avenues of life is made available for participants and the spiritual life becomes

holistic and relational. Ultimately, the house church within the current context has

the potential to further personalize the orthodoxy that is often embraced in the

Christian faith, when orthopraxy is brought home and experienced in community.

    2) *The house churches structure provides a partial explanation of the great*

attention paid to the family life in the letters of Paul and in other Christian writings.

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[83] Ibid, 109.

Within the primitive church, it is safe to assume that the relational paradigm of both Jew and Gentile, master and slave, husband and wife, father and child participated in the regular meetings. Throughout his writings, Paul emphasized these essential connections and provided a vision for relational harmony that was also associated with the spiritual life. In addition, the environment of the house church provided an experimental laboratory for these essential relationships to develop. Paul recognized the importance of establishing reconciled relationships for the glory of God's Kingdom and the potential impact throughout the world. In the spirit of Filson, "he knew that the Christian tree would be known by its fruits in home life, and particularly in the life of the home which housed the church."[84]

It is critical to remember that the original intent of the church is not about worship services and buildings; the church is about people together discovering a daily journey with God. Much of the relationship experienced with others is a reflection of the personal relationship with God. The expression of house church within homes identifies the concept of a spiritual family. Within the spiritual journey, it is important to experience mutual encouragement and support. In addition, the house church provides a forum of accountability for individuals to practice relational unity. In contrast, many individuals within the current church culture abandon the idea of individual development and personal accountability and identify spirituality based upon attending a religious gathering. Although not perfect, the house church provides a stable opportunity to oversee relational development throughout the journey.

3) The existence of several house churches in one city goes helps identify the

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[84] Ibid, 110.

tendency to congregational division within the apostolic age. Filson's primary point at this stage is that the multiplicity of house churches generated unbalanced structure that in many situations ultimately created disunity within the apostolic church. Filson further explains that the natural tendency of humanity is to join together with those of close association. This single point is often the case with groups politically, religiously, and socially. Therefore this could potentially explain the often-noted relational discourse that Paul combated throughout his writings.

Another important point that should be added to this overall section is that diversity is important to the Christian faith and has the potential to strengthen the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the spiritual journey. The tendency of humanity is to connect with those of close association. From this perspective, we limit potential relational unity that can be experienced under God's hand of reconciliation. The tendency for many segments of the church is to become separatists forming individual clubs only allowing other like-minded participants into the club. Diversity can potentially strengthen theology by individually experiencing personal discomfort. Fresh perspectives can be gained within the group and the overall Kingdom can be strengthened by the beautiful diversity that God originally created.

Nevertheless, the tendency for many is to become fearful and withdrawn. At times the early church was weakened and their message was hampered due to the turmoil of their disunity. As participants deconstructing the past, it is imperative not to become overcome by the divisive issues of diversity but seek unity in Christ, embrace reconciliation, and to focus on the overall goal of proclaiming the message of salvation. The house church structure continues to provide a platform to

accomplish this task.

4) *A study of the social situation associated with house churches helps identify the social status of the early Christians.* The notable work of the apostle Paul and his personal experiences identifies that the early church was socially mixed. Filson identifies that a large portion of the under-privileged greatly contributed to the overall population of the early Christian communities but the established institution was socially diverse. Furthermore, the house church provided the early missionary with an avenue to extend his message to entire the household. This method became a common strategy as Paul traveled from town to town. "One thing he had to have was a meeting place. The practical way to obtain one was to win a household with a home large enough to serve as the center of Christian activity."[85] Filson ultimately concludes that historically, the homes associated with the early movement were large enough to host multiple families so Christian history should properly recognize the validity of the socially mixed church.

Although strategically seeking out large homes to provide a meeting place may not have been part of Paul's overall strategy, however, like the early church embracing God's strategy for redemption of humanity can only strengthen the Christian community within the current culture. Understanding that all of humanity suffers from the power of sin and all are in need of redemption should impact the orthodoxy of the gathered community regardless of the location of the meeting. Again, the house church continues to provide a creative forum to motivate, encourage, and support the continued mission of the early church.

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[85] Ibid, 111.

5) *The development of church polity can never be understood without reference to the house churches.* The strength of this section as developed by Filson is that the house church provided a context for the development of leaders to continue the movement following the apostolic leaders. In addition, he asserts that inevitably, these leaders must have had some form of education, as well as administrative ability, to accomplish the tack of church leadership. However the early disciples serve as a reminder that the spiritual character of an individual, as well as the personal call, should serve as the primary gauge for leadership within the church.

Filson also claims that some of the leaders were initially identified as "God-fearers" and were familiar with the cost of taking risk. At this point Filson, could have also added the development of women within the early house church community. Indeed, connected with the theology, Christianity gave both women and slaves a new status, and many opportunities to participate in the ministry and mission of the early community. However, in other forms of religious life throughout the ancient world, women were treated as second class and group participation was limited. In addition, those in the Jewish faith belittled slaves and mocked their social status. Perhaps it was in the house church under the banner of hospitality where the theology and practice of equality started developing.

All of these factors may have contributed to the development of polity within the early church but the notable premise applicable for the current context is the establishment of a training ground for leaders within a house church setting. When properly utilized, the house church has the potential to provide special training for those involved with group life. Obviously, leaders are placed in a natural situation to

exhibit leadership, but others within the group experience opportunities to exhibit and develop their spiritual gifts as well. Within a properly functioning house church community, individual needs are identified and the community operates together to meet the various concerns. As a result, community truly functions as a body and the ecclesia is strengthened. Individuals feel an affinity with the group and connected with the overall vision of contributing to the advancement of God's Kingdom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the missional church of the current culture has much to discover when considering the issue of multiplying communities of faith. As true missionaries, it is necessary to identify spiritual components of the current culture and to establish a recognizable voice that relevantly addresses essential issues that contribute to the post-denominational world. As promoters of an ancient faith, the missional church must also rediscover the priority of intentionally blessing those within our world. Specific to this cause is learning to submit to the work of the Holy Spirit. With his focus on the early church, Roland Allen contributes significant insight to this task by identifying many examples. His often forgotten words encourage a fresh encounter with God's ultimate purpose. Finally, it is imperative to develop a theology and methodology that connects with the ecclesia of the First Century. Discovering the life of the early church strengthens the symbiotic relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. As a result, ecclesiology of the ancient world may be introduced to a new generation.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH AND PROJECT DESIGN

Research

This thesis was developed out the interest of multiplying Christian communities and is associated with the current, missional, and historical context of church planting. As a result of the current context, church planters are forced to reconsider the importance of structural components associated the First Century church. In addition, the cultural shift within the postmodern society has created frustration in communicating the Christian message to many who consider the essential components of the faith as irrelevant. The primary desire associated with this material is to engage the discussion of church planting by including the current, missional, and historical context and identify vital questions for those interested in pursuing the ancient practice. The questions essential to the practice of missional church planting within the current context are:

1. What are the primary scripture passages and First Century examples that promote the missional vision of church planting as an effective strategy for evangelism?

2. What are the missional imperatives of the First Century Church?

3. What are the New Testament strategies utilized for starting churches?

4. What are the essential leadership characteristics of a missional church planter in a postmodern setting?

5. What are the critical components of a post-denominational culture that a church planter in a postmodern society should identify and address in their ministry?

6. What are the missional components of the First Century Church that transfer into a post-denominational setting for church planters?

Although not complete, these questions help identify issues associated with orthodoxy and orthopraxy within the formation of ecclesia. In addition, these questions provide the development of the seminar identified in Chapter Five, design to assist the multiplication vision of Christian communities within the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania / South Jersey.

Current Context

Church planters in the current context seeking to understand the significance of the movement should first consider the societal implications of the current context. The world is experiencing rapid change. One of the most notable changes within our culture has been the philosophical and societal evolution of modernism and postmodernism. Modernization within the world was established during the enlightenment period, and it represented a time when people engaged the world with an "enlightened" view of reality. In addition the enlightenment provided a time when society began shifting toward science and reason. It was also during this philosophical transition that the premise of traditional institutions throughout society were re-examined concluding with additional questions for some and ultimate

rejection for others. The pursuit of truth was perceived as something that could be discovered individually and obtained scientifically.

Within the un-churched, post-Christian culture of the current context, it is imperative that church planters identify the often neglect of church life, and embraces the missional mandate identified in the missionary call. The communal mission of the church therefore is represented in her capacity to represent the community elements of God to an alienated world. As a result, the current culture is in search of a Christian community where relationships are restored and function in light of the reconciled nature of the trinity. It is important for church planters to also consider the cultural paradigm shifts that have led to the post-Christian era and understand Christian ministry within this context.

Another important component for the church planter in the current context is to effectively lead a missional community to reorder and reclaim the essential gifts, skills, and natural abilities connected with the role of Christian leadership. Church planters and denominations in the modern era often started and developed churches by simply providing strategic spaces within the community to observe the historical sacraments and other additional functions associated with church life. Providing these high visual locations continues to ensure an effective strategy, however within the increasing postmodern context, the success established through visual influences will decrease primarily because of distrust in the establishment of the historical church. Therefore it will become increasingly more important in the postmodern world to focus on developing individuals and implementing missionaries throughout segments of society.

Unfortunately, the institutionalized church has lost a significant amount of influence as a spiritual authority within the post-Christian context. This issue has developed two extraordinary problems for religious communities. First, a large portion of religious seekers no longer turn to the church for answers to the spiritual questions. The concept of organized religion among many spiritual seekers is one of distrust due to expectations of rigid conformity. For this large population of the current culture, answers are often found in the religion section of the local bookstore. Seekers within the current context however are drawn toward the freedom to explore individually. These seekers also see no need to involve their lives in a religious institution that seems to have limited ability in connecting spiritually with God.

Missional Context

When considering the concept of church planting within the missional context, it is important to include qualities such as: sent by God as missionaries into society; establish and develop meaningful relationships as a representation of community; identify and care for the societal needs within the community; every member in the body seeking to serve; and passionate obedience to the Holy Spirit. Many properly recognize the concept of missional as a pattern of life expressed in the behavior of Jesus. The savior of the world is *Missio Dei* to all creation. As a result, the church is an expression of the son being sent by the Father and empowered by the Spirit for the good of the world. Today churches are re-thinking the concept of altruistic behavior and establishing patterns of life often connected with the role of evangelism that are intended to benefit those outside the community of faith.

The term "missional" has origins identified with the established church movement of the First Century. The word however did not appear until 1907. Nevertheless, many of the concepts were present in the in the early church movement as recorded in the book of Acts. Unfortunately, within the current culture there continues to remain much confusion concerning the meaning of "missional." Spontaneous multiplication represented within the First Century church continues to resonate with many in the current culture leading to additional discoveries of the missional abstract.

Missional insights also elucidate the evolving role of church planting. Within the missional context, it is imperative to rediscover the practice of church planting in light of the First Century pattern of missions and evangelism. Primarily as missionaries, church planters should recognize and commit to personal involvement in the *Missio Dei*, continually seeking to better understand participation in God's mission. The examples expressed in the New Testament identify participants radically following Christ by engaging in the primary work of God. Christ is the essential message and the power of the Holy Spirit is the ultimate sustainer of this important work. This vision of missional participation identifies a community serious about the cause of penetrating culture brining healing and wholeness to the social ills of the day. As a result, one of the most important elements associated with providing clarity to the term missional is the correlation between social justice and evangelism.

The missional context is a reminder that the current church should rediscover the priority of intentionally blessing the world. The activity of blessing is specifically connected to the continual work of the Holy Spirit. Roland Allen a missionary in the

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early 1900's provides significant insight to this task by identifying practical examples

of submitting to the activity of the Holy Spirit. Allen reminds the church that too

often it is the accepted practice of leaders to establish a people dependent on the

leadership of those appointed to serve the church rather than promote obedience to

the Holy Spirit. The missional context also points to the early church and presents a

community of believer's mutually dependent upon the Holy Spirit. This point

establishes important implications for the ultimate purpose for the life of a Christ

follower. The fresh message of Allen encourages a renewed encounter with God's

primary purpose. Ultimately Rolland Allen reminds the church of the missional

context by identifying the symbiotic relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Historical Context

The historical context of church planting may never have been fully realized

without the full instructions that Jesus communicated to his disciples prior to the end

of his earthly ministry. As a result, the apostles were serious about the missional

announcement and incorporated the vision into the fabric of the early faith

communities. The natural multiplication and spontaneous growth became a notable

characteristic of the early period. Churches were planted in Rome, multiple cities

throughout Samaria, Malta, Sicily, Cyprus, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi,

Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Crete. By the end of the first

century churches were also established in places like Sardis, Laodicia, Smyma,

Thyatira, Pergamos, and North Africa. Notably, within the network, these early

communities established a partnership that enabled longevity, stability, and successful

multiplication for many of these communities. Churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome intentionally joined forces with congregations by sending missionaries, praying, and providing financial support.

The New Testament is also clear about the historical mandate of missional involvement producing spontaneous multiplication. Although the Bible never uses the words mission or missionary, it is clear that the missional mandate influenced their individual participation, community structure, as well as the missionary activity throughout the network. As a result, being on "mission" is the very heart of scripture, the pivotal point of salvation, and the foundation of the church. The Messianic role of Christ fully influenced the heart of the early followers and the Great Commission identifies this mission-centered life that is expected of followers of every generation.

Additionally, the historical context identified in the New Testament presents the formation for much of this mission activity through the structure of the apostolic ministry. God used the apostle Paul as a major influencer in the formation of missions within the life of the early church. However, Paul presents more than just a process for missions, through his actions he demonstrates a lifestyle of commitment to this important cause.

A notable strategy within the First Century church is identified through the development of the participants associated with the network of the early communities of faith. These believers joined an aggressive strategy of spontaneous multiplication through evangelism within the home. The house church structure of the First Century church provided a natural environment for the presentation of the intended message. During the formative process of these Christian communities, the house church

structure also produced a notable environment for new relationships to develop. The regular gatherings in homes of these early Christian communities provided a safe setting for non-believers to explore the Christian message. During the First Century Christian gatherings, these private homes enabled a distinctive Christ centered message through teaching and worship, and a common meal was also shared. These important elements established a faith that was different than Judaism. The shaping influences specific to these new communities developed out of local leadership, establishment of diverse relationships, and a natural setting for the presentation of the Christian message.

Project Design

The Baptist Convention of PASJ (Pennsylvania, South Jersey) is a network of 395 churches living among a population of 15 million people. 11 million people within the Convention boundaries are considered un-churched. The PASJ Convention has adopted an initiative to create a church planting movement with the goal of producing 1,000 churches within the organization by the year 2011. Currently, the Convention is divided into three regions and consists of 8 Baptist Associations. In order for this initiative to be realized, it is imperative that the churches within the Convention develop and implement a system that produces a multiplication movement throughout the state of Pennsylvania.

Currently, the Convention provides an introductory seminar designed to explore strategic issues associated with the task of starting new churches. The goal is to develop a specific strategy that produces healthy, reproducible communities of

faith. General issues discussed during the basic training include: developing a core team, leadership development, the overall vision of church planting, developing core values, evangelism, administrative issues, and prayer. The training is facilitated by a regional director associated with the State Convention and takes place over a two-day period. In addition, the Convention also provides a mentor that administers assistance throughout the formative stages of the church planting process.

The end result of this project identified in Chapter Five is a seminar designed to further assist the Baptist Convention of PASJ with the task of developing a multiplication movement. In order to accomplish this goal it is imperative to create healthy churches that spontaneously reproduce. Church planters that have been assessed by the PASJ, and have completed the Basic Training Seminar will be invited to attend the Missional Church Planting Seminar. The seminar is to be administered in 3 sessions, with each session lasting 2 hours, and occurring over a 6-month period of time. During the first, third, and fifth months, the church planter will assemble with other planters to go through the three sessions identified in Chapter Five. During the second, fourth, and sixth month, the planter will discuss seminar material with his or her core group, and report progress or concerns to the regional director.

The seminar values the individual call of the planter and is created to further assist with clarity and understanding of critical elements associated with church planting within a postmodern setting. The seminar is not intended to provide a specific model to be reproduced in various locations. The seminar will also provide resources designed for discussion within a church planters core group.

Intrinsic to the nature of the movement, it is essential to consider and rediscover the example of first century church. Much like the early leaders associated with the primitive church, it is crucial to identify the cultural paradigms that exist within the current context. In addition, the seminar provides a definition of the term missional and identifies missional elements associated within the church movement of the first century world. Finally, the seminar elucidates structural elements essential to the life of the early church. In all, the purpose is to create indigenous communities of faith who exemplify a harmonious expression of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Summary and Future Research

In light of the information gained from this project, I feel it is important to continue pursuing issues associated with evangelization in a post-Christian context. Notable, it is important to remember that the First Century church experienced many of the same issues associated with Christian communities in the postmodern society. Specific issues of concern are related to the methodology and structural components of churches designed to reach those with a postmodern worldview. North American society continues to become increasingly pluralistic and greater levels of disinterest develop toward Christian communities. Although there are many statistically growing churches, it is my opinion that overall churches throughout North America do not function as a healthy network of communities seeking to promote Kingdom growth. It is of great interest to consider the network establishment of First Century and recapture the spirit of Kingdom growth.

In addition, this study has created a desire to further investigate issues associated with missional training and development within the current context. The church of the future must answer the missionary questions: What did the early church leaders do to incorporate the missionary strategy throughout the network of Christian communities? What must current leaders do to incorporate this same missionary passion within local congregations? These questions ultimately lead to issues associated with spiritual development within the Christian church. Consequently, the First Century church provides a model of spiritual development within the structure of community. Future research issues are also connected with community development and the promotion of an altruistic vision.

CHAPTER 5

THE SEMINAR

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 e. *What are the critical components of a post-denominational culture that a church planter in a postmodern society should identify and address in their ministry?*
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Presenter Material

Time	Topic	Activity	Preparation
10 minutes	Welcome and opening prayer	Facilitator will introduce purpose of meeting and outline the schedule	Get familiar with the flow of the meeting as outlined session 1. Be prepared to identify the main points discussed during the first session
10 minutes	Introduction of facilitator and participants	Questions to be asked of participants1) What is your name, 2) Where are you planting, 3) How long have you been involved with the plant?	
20 minutes	Introduction: The Evolution of Culture. Part 1 of A Session 1.	Discuss key transitions throughout the evolution of culture identifying characteristics of Postmodernism. *This covers the first page of session 1*	Read material under Current Culture section and identify the evolution of postmodernism. Identify key concerns of planting churches in a postmodern context
10 minutes	*Break*	*Break*	*Break*
20 minutes	Part 2 of A Session 1.	Identify and discuss distinctions between ministry in the modern world versus the postmodern world	Study the material in Part 2 of A Session 1. The material includes information from Barna and section on Modern versus Postmodern
20 minutes	Section B Session 1. What Shall We Do?	Identify and discuss material in the section entitled What Shall We Do? Notice the key characteristics of this section.	Study the material in the leaders section under Missional Context. Notce the key characteristics of the First Century

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			Church.
20 minutes	Section C Session 1	Identify and discuss the material in Section C of Session 1 – "What Shall We Say?"	Study the material in the leaders section Missional Context. Notice the key characteristics in the study guide "What Shall We Say?" Be prepared to lead the presentation.
10 minutes	A New Front Door	Briefly identify the section entitled "A New Front Door." This material is to be used a resource for the church planter and the core team.	Be prepared to make a transition identifying the importance of church websites. Encourage the participants to discuss the material with their core team.

Session 1: How Did We Get Here?

Facilitator Study Guide

Current Context

Church planters in the current context seeking to understand the significance of the movement should first consider the societal implications of the current context. The world is experiencing rapid change. One of the most notable changes within our culture has been the philosophical and societal evolution of modernism and postmodernism. Modernization within the world was established during the enlightenment period, and it represented a time when people engaged the world with an "enlightened" view of reality. In addition the enlightenment provided a time when society began shifting toward science and reason. It was also during this philosophical transition that the premise of traditional institutions throughout society were re-examined concluding with additional questions for some and ultimate rejection for others. The pursuit of truth was perceived as something that could be discovered individually and obtained scientifically.

Within the un-churched, post-Christian culture of the current context, it is imperative that church planters identify the often neglect of church life, and embrace the missional mandate identified in the missionary call. The communal mission of the church therefore is represented in her capacity to represent the community elements of God to an alienated world. As a result, the current culture is in search of a Christian community where relationships are restored and function in light of the reconciled nature of the trinity. It is important for church planters to also consider the

cultural paradigm shifts that have led to the post-Christian era and understand Christian ministry within this context.

Another important component for the church planter in the current context is to effectively lead a missional community to reorder and reclaim the essential gifts, skills, and natural abilities connected with the role of Christian leadership. Church planters and denominations in the modern era often started and developed churches by simply providing strategic spaces within the community to observe the historical sacraments and other additional functions associated with church life. Providing these high visual locations continues to ensure an effective strategy, however within the increasing postmodern context, the success established through visual influences will decrease primarily because of distrust in the establishment of the historical church. Therefore it will become increasingly more important in the postmodern world to focus on developing individuals and implementing missionaries throughout segments of society.

Unfortunately, the institutionalized church has lost a significant amount of influence as a spiritual authority within the post-Christian context. This issue has developed two extraordinary problems for religious communities. First, a large portion of religious seekers no longer turn to the church for answers to the spiritual questions. The concept of organized religion among many spiritual seekers is one of distrust due to expectations of rigid conformity. For this large population of the current culture, answers are often found in the religion section of the local bookstore. Seekers within the current context however are drawn toward the freedom to explore

individually. These seekers also see no need to involve their lives in a religious

institution that seems to have limited ability in connecting spiritually with God.

Six Essential Questions for Church Planters in a Postmodern Context

What are the missional imperatives of the First Century Church?

The formation of the multiplication process for the First Century church was

established and thrived out of certain missional imperatives that represented the core

of their convictions. The Holy Spirit empowered their journey and the believers

experienced confidence in their call and found hope and freedom in the relationship

with Christ. These imperatives served as the foundation of the involvement and

ultimately added clarity and direction for their purpose. These imperatives were not

always present however, when they surfaced, the central message of the community

was easily recognized within their methods.

Mission starts with God

Many within the First Century community believed that their involvement was

initiated out of God's great plan.   God's nature is missional and the early church

desired to represent his image to the world. Nevertheless, the early church movement

was held captive by the notion that they were participants in God's mission. Later

established, the term *Missio Dei,* provides contemporary clarity concerning "God's

Mission in Christ." A proper understanding of God's mission serves as a reminder

that communities of faith are merely instruments that God graciously chooses to use.

Ethical standards based on profession of faith

Early within the movement, Christianity quickly established the perception that followers of Christ embraced higher levels of morality. This fundamental belief was established out of a transformative encounter with Christ, rather than by attempting to manipulate God to gain his favor. This missional imperative represents the transformation produced by Christ and greater identifies the ultimate purpose of his atonement. For the First Century world, the Christian message presented freedom from the established legalistic laws by placing faith in the One who overcame the law. Morality within the early Christian movement was expected and represented the continual path of transformation. For the early church, the practice of baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist pointed to the redemptive act of Christ and reminded the adherents of the moral obligation associated with their profession of faith.

Salvation available to all through Christ

For the early church, the belief in the redemptive work of the Messiah was an essential missional imperative that gave vision to their overall purpose. Eventually this imperative certified the cause of the mission to the Gentiles. The leaders of the First Century church were motivated toward the multiplication of missional communities out of God's love for the world and the world's great need for Christ. During this time in history many Jews and Gentiles discovered the reality of God's irresistible nature identified by the redeeming acts of Christ that were eagerly expressed within the community of saints.

Altruistic involvement

Researchers from the School of Social Work at Baylor University after three year project discovered that congregants from multiple denominations who intentionally volunteered with various community service projects expressed deeper levels of faith within their spiritual journey. It is important for church planters within the postmodern context to express the altruistic nature of the Christian faith and develop a process to involve people in service-oriented projects. The following is a list of recommendations for church leaders to involve congregants in community service:

- o *Educating: It is important to Provide a biblical/theological rationale for community ministry, specifically identifying problems and needs within the community, identifying an reflecting on past community ministry experiences, identify connections between faith and community ministry, assist people with interpreting their community ministry experiences within a Christian framework.*

- o *Informing: Announcing within the group specific needs and opportunities for involvement within community ministry.*

- o *Promoting: Encouraging participation in and supporting community ministries, matching and recruiting individuals for particular ministry activities, arrange opportunities for volunteers to share about their experiences, and modeling specific involvement.*

- o *Supporting: Regular prayer for community ministries (including various volunteers and recipients of ministry), providing opportunities for fund raisin for and/or contributing congregational finances toward a local ministry, and recognizing, affirming participation in community ministry, and holding people accountable for following through with their commitments to various ministries.*

- o *Initiating: Initiating involvement, taking the responsibility to make or respond to contacts with other organizations, and assimilating planning groups within the organization.*

The Impact of Volunteering on Christian Faith and Congregational Life
Diana Garland, Dennis Myers, Terry Wolfer

Session 2: Incorporate Missional
Facilitator Lesson Plan

Time	Topic	Activity	Preparation
10 minutes	Welcome and opening prayer	Facilitator will review the 3 sections of session 1 pointing out main issues associated with planting churches in a postmodern setting.	Review material is session 1. Identify key issues for church planters.
10 minutes	Provide an opportunity for questions / discussion of material from session 1.	Questions to pose are: 1) What do you find to be difficult with church planting in a postmodern setting, 2) How do you plan to use your website to connect with people not connected with church?	Review the material in the "A New Front Door" section and be prepared to identify key elements of the development process.
20 minutes	Introduction Session 2: Incorporate Missional into the Life of the Community.	Discuss key elements identified in this section. *This covers the first page of session 2*	Read material under the Missional Context section and identify the key components of missional. Take time to help the group develop a working definition for missional. Look at the contribution of other authors to become with the concept of missional.
10 minutes	*Break*	*Break*	*Break*
20 minutes	Part 2 of A Session 2.	Present the material in Part 2 of A Session 2. Identify characteristics of	Study the material in Part 2 of A Session 2. Read through the

		missional in the early church.	facilitator material review question 2 under missional context and also the material under the historical context.
20 minutes	Section B Session 2. From Consumer Driven to Missional Living.	Identify and discuss material in the section entitled From Consumer Driven to Missional Living. Notice the key characteristics of this section.	Review the material in the leaders section and be ready to facilitate the discussion.
20 minutes	Section C Session 2. Leaders for a New Generation.	Identify and discuss the material in Section C of Session 2 – Leaders for a New Generation	Study the material in the leaders section Missional Context and review the participant study guide.
10 minutes	Kingdom Growth Questions of Session 2.	Briefly identify the questions in session 2 under section B.	Identify the questions in Session 2 under "From Consumer Driven to Missional living" – Kingdom Growth Questions. Have participants work through these questions with their core. They should be prepared to discuss during the next meeting.

Session 2: Incorporate Missional into the life of the community

Facilitator Study Guide

When investigating the significant role of church planting throughout history, it is imperative to consider the missional concept as it relates to the continued task of launching and multiplying new churches. Discovering the etymology of missional begins a process of reestablishing motive as it pertains to orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Biblical passages and historical examples of early church life provide in-depth accounts for the concept of missional. In addition, the current cultural revitalization of this idea within evangelical circles has offered fresh vision for the role of the redeemed.

Presently, there is much confusion surrounding the concept of missional. In some circles, the notion is considered threatening, while others make assumptions for its meaning. It is important that the current-church culture seeks to rediscover the intrinsic missional movement that was established at the birth of the early church. It is equally important to gain perspective on the current concepts that are being used to describe the term. Therefore, the two areas for consideration are: a clear contemporary explanation of the particular word missional, as well as additional insights surrounding the origin of this specific concept. This study will elucidate the task of launching and multiplying missional communities in a postmodern context.

Historical review of Missional

The word *missional* first appeared in the 1907 Oxford English Dictionary and is associated with the concept of doing missionary work. More recently the Southern

Baptist Convention has connected the concept of missional as building the Kingdom of God from a communal perspective as a group of missionaries. Emergent leaders have added to the discussion by offering characteristics associated with the notion. These traits demonstrated in church life include qualities such as: sent by God as missionaries to their own culture; establishing and developing meaningful relationships; identifying and caring for the needs within the community; every member in the body is called to serve; and passionate obedience to the Holy Spirit. For other leaders the concept of missional is something that leads back to the expressed life of Jesus. The savior of the world is *Missio Dei* to all creation. From this perspective, the church continues to be sent by the Father and empowered by the Spirit for the good of the world. As a result, many churches are re-thinking the concept of service and establishing projects often connected with the role of evangelism that are intended to benefit those outside the community of faith.

When people are first introduced to the term, many assume the responsibility of supporting the work of missions. This has become the missional norm for many associated with American Christianity. Obviously, the responsibility of the church is to promote missions throughout the world. Churches support mission organizations and denominational efforts on a regular basis. For the year 2007, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has a goal of 150 million dollars for foreign missions support. Currently there are 5,153 people serving the foreign world through this organization. God has blessed this and other organizations that promote the vision of missions to reach the world for the cause of Christ. However,

in a world where we have made this important mandate part of the process, many have substituted a program or an activity for a life-style and calling.

The mandate to be missions-minded and to support the foreign field is a worthy cause and an important component to the overall missional focus. However, due to the apathetic climate of the Western world in relation to Christianity, people are starting to recognize North America itself as a mission field. Fortunately, the current culture is reminiscent of the early believers' world during the first century, A.D. We are living in a time in which people continue to ask questions associated with life's purpose and to seek answers to deeper ontological issues. Unfortunately, it has taken a dramatic shift within society to bring many to the realization that the work has always been missional.

Perhaps one of the most important elements associated with providing clarity to the term missional is the correlation between social justice and evangelism. The concept of social justice has been around long before this phrase was first used by a Sicilian priest, Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio, in 1840; however, the expression social justice conveys the idea that it is the responsibility of individuals within society to become advocates and to enact change on the social afflictions of those who experience injustice. Within contemporary religious circles, the concept of social justice has often been associated with Liberation theology. Conversely, the notion of evangelism has a deep relationship with Fundamentalism. Within this movement, there is a passion to remain true to the fundamentals of the faith, Biblical inerrancy, and the pursuit of a literal interpretation.

Essential questions for church planters in a postmodern context

What are the primary scriptural passages and historical examples that promote the missional vision of church planting as an effective strategy for evangelism?

The primary scriptural passages that identify the missiological concept of

church planting as an effective strategy of evangelism are:

Acts 8:4-8:

> Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

Out of persecution, many exemplified boldness and spread the message throughout

the region. The concept of salvation being offered to Samaritans was radical. Philip

serves as a great example as one who responded out of obedience to the last recorded

words of Christ. Some of the early followers of Christ challenged the established

views of elitism within the Jewish faith, and began to embrace a distinct notion that

salvation is available to all. Notably, the early believers valued cohesion between

orthodoxy and orthopraxy. At best within First Century Judaism, there were mixed

emotions concerning the Samaritans, but the actions of these early followers,

identified a transition within their method that would eventually lead to the Gentile

mission.

Another example of missional church planting within the book of Acts is

identified in the story of the Gentile mission:

> Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Most scholars believe that it was primarily individuals associated with the Hellenistic party as supporters of Stephen who fled during

this period. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Acts 11:19-24

Much like the relationship with the Samaritans, for those within the Jewish faith, there existed a wide range of emotions toward the Gentiles. Proselytizing was allowed; however, Gentiles had limited participation within the organization. These proselytes' primary involvement within Judaism existed within the synagogue. It was within the Synagogue that Gentile converts explored the life and culture of Judaism. As a result of intentional missional living, the First Century believers spoke the message of Christ and it penetrated the Jewish synagogue structure and eventually enabled the multiplication of Christian churches. In addition, Acts 11 provides the first account of the early followers specifically targeting the Greek population of Antioch.

The church at Antioch is also the first community of faith to ignite a major missionary sending strategy within the First Century:

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:1-3

This same missional fervor enabled Christianity of the First Century to establish many new communities within the first twenty-five years following the birth of the

New Testament church at Pentecost. Churches were also planted in Rome, Malta,

Sicily, Cyprus, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens,

Corinth, Ephesus, and Crete. In addition, by the end of the First Century churches

were established in places like Sardis, Laodicia, Smyma, Thyatira, Pergamos, and

North Africa. By nature, these early churches provided missional cohesion between

orthodoxy and orthopraxy.   Within the network, a missional partnership was present

that enabled longevity, stability, and successful ministry for many of these

communities. Although not without problems, multiplication of the mission

consistently supported the overall vision. In addition, churches in Jerusalem,

Antioch, and Rome intentionally joined forces with congregations throughout the

region by sending missionaries, praying, and providing financial support.

Essential question for church planters in a postmodern context

What are the missional principles of the first century church that transfer into a post-denominational setting for church planters?

The early church demonstrated that are essential principles within the life of

the early community that enabled a major move of God's grace within their world.

Specifically, the missional principles are:

Rediscovering the role of the Holy Spirit

The important missional principle of rediscovering the role of the Holy Spirit

begins the journey from self-reliance to a deeper dependence in God's continual

involvement. The early followers of Christ were deeply committed to prayer and

obediently responded to the Holy Spirit's leading. Within the current church culture

many are satisfied with personal accomplishments that further develop an unhealthy

dependence on leaders. Leadership is essential for the life of the church however, as

spiritual leaders, it is imperative within the post-denominational setting to assist

individuals to personally discover a life reliant on God's leadership. In addition, for

the missional health of the church, the multiplication of Christian communities is

established out of corporate hope in God's involvement. Too often the church within

the current culture has placed false hope in programs, finances, and personnel. The

first century church had limited resources but demonstrated a reliance on God's Spirit

that ultimately transformed much of the culture.

Rediscovering the life of a missionary

Roland Allen reminds the church that Paul primarily sought to develop

missionaries. The early community of believers lived in a setting of philosophical

opposition. Nevertheless, they were called to faithfully spread the message even in

the midst of adversity. Much of their focus was upon the establishment of converts.

Evangelism was associated with spiritual development. After the church became an

institution, a shift in purpose was established. As a result, the mantra for many within

the modern church is the recognition of every member living a life as a "minister."

For the early church, this seems to fall short of the vision that Paul presented.

Certainly Paul and the members of the early church recognized the importance of

mutually serving and growing together as a community. The spiritual transition of

the current culture has forced the church to reconsider this notion. Lay leadership

remains essential under this paradigm but an inward organizational focus is reordered

by an outward call to assist others within their spiritual journey. It is imperative to recognize this focus as an essential part of spiritual development.

Rediscovering Kingdom Growth

Finally, in a post-denominational setting, it is important to reconsider the network and together discover the realities of Kingdom growth. The early church leaders were committed to the principle of advancing God's Kingdom. These believers were not overcome by their diversity. At times their focus shifted, but in large part, these believers were committed to relevantly presenting the message of Christ to a hopeless world. Too often the church within the current context has presented a shattered image of Christ. Political, theological, and social diversity has made the message complex. Kingdom growth recognizes that the message of Christ is much more important than individual preferences. In a world in which people desire authenticity, the message received has been irrelevant and inauthentic. A transition to Kingdom growth rivals individual church growth and ultimately pursues a unified message establishing an unstoppable force. In short, overcoming diversity for the sake of Christ is pleasing to God and is characteristic of many communities of faith within the first century world.

Essential question for church planters in a postmodern context

What are the essential leadership characteristics of a missional church planter in a postmodern setting?

A primary element associated with the development and multiplication of churches is the critical role of leadership. Like other periods throughout history, the postmodern

context provides unique issues that require the leader to reorder essential gifts, skills, and natural abilities to penetrate the culture with the message of salvation. Notable essentials for the postmodern leader include the following:

Thinking-out-of-the-box

A common church planting practice within the modern period included establishing a church building in a strategic location. In many church-planting situations, this continues to serve as a major element of the strategy. Notably, this practice may continue to produce successful results. However, as the culture continues to emerge as a Post-Protestant context for many, the church building will become less relevant. As a result, it is essential for the church-planter within the postmodern context to "think-out-of-the-box." Within this setting it will also require more than candles and incense to speak relevantly to a large population of disinterested seekers. Imperative to this specific essential is the development of authenticity. The leader in the postmodern setting should understand his or her calling and refrain from compromising the specific task given by God.

Develop a team around the mission

It is important for the church to recognize that it takes a community to attract those within a postmodern setting. In addition, the transitional nature of Christian ministry within the current culture and the time constraints of a scheduled society create difficulty in securing commitments within the core. It is essential for the church-planter to establish a team that develops a specific mission for reaching their

community. Individuals who provide input also create ownership. Within this forum, God has freedom to establish communities where people grow and develop through the journey and ultimately speak relevantly the message of Christ. Notable characteristics like commitment, honesty, and accountability are primary within the development of a team.

Equip individuals through spiritual development

It is essential for the postmodern leader to consider the process for spiritual development. Specific to this section is the realization that the journey includes an inward assessment of personal authenticity and wholeness. This inward focus produces a primary connection with self and others. Spiritual development also leads to the discovery of individual purpose and meaning of life. Ultimately, spiritual development is the realization of a new life established in Christ. The church-planter in a postmodern setting embraces a journey of personal discovery and is committed to communal spiritual formation experienced through the practice of worship, hospitality, conversation, and service.

Session 3: Rethinking Structure
Facilitator Lesson Plan

Time	Topic	Activity	Preparation
10 minutes	Welcome and opening prayer	Facilitator will review the 3 sections of session 2 pointing out main issues associated incorporating missional into the life of the community	Review material is session 2. Identify key issues for church planters.
10 minutes	Provide an opportunity for questions / discussion of material from session 2.	Questions to pose are: 1) What is missional , 2) How do you plan to implement multiplication into your church plant?	Review the material in the "Incorporate Missional into…" section and be prepared to identify key elements of the missional process.
20 minutes	Introduction Session 3: How did they start?	Present / discuss key elements identified in this section.	Read material under the Missional Context section and identify section related to houses of prayer and houses of study.
10 minutes	*Break*	*Break*	*Break*
20 minutes	Part 2 of A Session 3.	Present the material in Part 2 of A Session 3. Missionary Network and House to House influence	Study the material in Part 2 of A Session 3. Read the material associated with this section and lead the presentation
20 minutes	Section B Session 3. What were the effects?	Identify and discuss material in the section entitled What were the effects – Specifically identify the 5 implications	Review the material in the leaders section and be ready to facilitate the discussion. Give special consideration to the 5 implications and relate the material to the relevance

			within the postmodern setting
20 minutes	Section C Session 3. How do we make the shift?	Identify and discuss the material in Section C of Session 3 – How do we make the shift?	Study the material in the leaders section and lead a discussion concerning creating communities that are connected with the ancient church and speak to the present context.
10 minutes	Example Constitution for the Journey	Briefly identify the material and lead church planters to discuss material with their core team.	Read through the Constitution example and identify examples where the constitution facilitates the structure.

Session 3: Rethink Structure

Facilitator Study Guide

Essential question for church planters in a postmodern context

What are the New Testament strategies utilized for starting churches?

Some of the leaders within the early church associated with the multiplication of new communities of faith seemed to follow certain steps to establish new works. An obvious driving force behind the movement was the vision to bring Christ to the world.   It is not clear if these steps were an intentional process of the strategy of the leaders simply following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What is clear, however, is that the historical account presented in the New Testament identifies a cluster of deliberate patterns that routinely enhanced the mission of starting these new churches.

Association with the Synagogue

The historical institution of the synagogue was utilized to develop and advance new Christian communities of faith. Notable throughout the Mediterranean world these "houses of prayer" and "houses of teaching" provided a launching pad for the exploration of Christianity. Within the synagogue structure, existed the expectation of morality as well as the preservation of the Torah. Initially early missionaries were also permitted the opportunity to explain the Christian message. The early missionary, Paul, would often visit the synagogue upon arriving in a new city. Eventually, some of the components of the synagogue structure were utilized within the establishment of Christian communities.

Missionary work

The heartbeat of missionary work is concerned with the spiritual condition of people throughout the world. The establishment of the church provided a lighthouse for individuals to recognize God's involvement within the world. Paul committed himself to the task of missionary work as a strategy for establishing new communities of faith. He understood that the development of healthy churches provided avenues for individuals to come to faith in Christ. Another essential component of his missionary work included the development of leaders within the church. These leaders provided vision, direction, and protection for the community of faith. Ultimately, a healthy community of faith naturally exemplifies evangelistic zeal. As a missionary, Paul strategically focused on important cities within regions to penetrate through the multiplication of evangelistic churches.

House to house influence

Another strategic component for the multiplication of Christian communities within the early church was the development of house churches. In his later missionary expeditions, upon entering cities, Paul intentionally sought out houses to establish a central location for his operation. Strategically, Paul used the house church structure to develop indigenous leadership, diverse relationships, and a natural spiritual environment to present message of Christianity. Spirituality within the home was common within the First Century. Normal spiritual practices included prayer, breaking bread together, development of relationships, and hospitality.

Essential question for church planters in a postmodern context

What are the critical components of a post-denominational culture that a church planter in a postmodern society should identify and address in their ministry?

Living in a post-denominational culture negates many of the religious norms of life within the modern era. These changes impact worship style and organizational structure and will continue to challenge the methods in which the message is articulated. It is imperative that the church-planter identifies and addresses specific issues associated with secular culture, as well as the purpose and structure of the Christian community.

Recognize and Respond to Postmodern influence

Postmodernism is a cultural reality that has made an impact within the historical church and more specifically the church realized with the modern era. The world-view of postmodernism stands in contrast to modernism. Characteristic to the postmodern world-view is the development of a non-foundational pursuit of truth. All belief systems are held accountable and no premise is considered unquestionable. As a result there is great suspicion associated with truth claims. Therefore, assurance and convictions are held in low regard. The notion of mystery is comfortable within the spiritual discussion. Ultimately, postmodernism has made an impact with orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Incorporate "Missional" into the life of the community

As a result of postmodernism, the Christian church has been forced to rediscover formative issues associated with missional. Author Rolland Allen provides insight concerning the early church and her mission through his literary works, *Missionary Methods* and *Spontaneous Expansion*. His focus on mission within the early church provides grater clarity for the concept of missional. Specifically, missional incorporates a mature understanding of culture, a greater dependence on the Holy Spirit, and relevant communication of the Christian message. Ultimately, missional seeks to develop missionaries who exemplify a reconciled life resulting from a transformative connection with Christ. Within the Christian community, the church becomes a place where relationships are restored and function in light of the reconciled nature of the Trinity.

Rethink Structure

The concept of missional forces the church to rethink the structure of the church within the current context. Floyd Filson reminds the current church of the importance of rediscovering the primitive structure of the First Century church. Specifically the early church was birthed and developed within the home. As a result, the church was not associated with a building, but more importantly, a people. The house structure provided a natural environment for the development of essential relationships. In addition, the establishment of community developed through hospitality and the common meal. Meeting in private homes also provided an opportunity to develop a distinctive form of worship. It is also important to

remember that within the house church of the First Century, the early church experienced diversity within their community. The early believers were not overcome by the diversity but more importantly began discovering issues associated with equality and personal responsibility to contribute to the overall growth of the community.

Structural Context: Rediscovering the Significance of the House Church

Floyd Filson revealed a crucial component concerning the relationship between ecclesiology and the continually emerging role of orthopraxy within the Christian faith. Filson contends that the concept of church is better understood if serious attention is given to the structural development of the First Century church. The house church was established as an institution that contributed significantly to the overall goal of the First Century church. From the beginning, Christians met in the homes of those associated with the community of faith. The implications of the house church structure for the early church are extensive and provide insight into the foundation of primitive practices and the development of a community. Therefore, to negate the importance of this ancient institution weakens the pursuit of deconstructing ecclesiology to ascertain sound orthodoxy and orthopraxy within the current culture.

Acts 1:13, is the first reference that identifies the possible use of a physical house as a meeting place for the early disciples of the ascended Christ. Acts 2:46, is often identified as the foundational passage establishing the association of individual homes as part of the structural component for ecclesia within the First Century. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul delivers a message to his primary audience by making a

reference to the church that meets in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. The individual

homes of believers were a primary meeting place for group gatherings, which

consisted of teaching and evangelistic preaching. In addition, Act 19:9 provides a

limited reference of Paul and the disciples using the lecture hall of "Tyrannus" as a

regular meeting place for a period of two years. As a result, "all the Jews and Greeks

who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." (Acts 19:10)   These

brief references further support the importance of discovering the magnitude

associated with regular house church gathering of the early church.

Filson provides five specific reasons the house-church structure was important

to the life and mission of the Apostolic Church:

1) *The house church provided a forum for the followers of Jesus to develop a*

distinctive Christian worship and fellowship during the first days of the apostolic age.

The First Century church was not dependent upon the pattern of worship and

fellowship experienced at the Temple. As a result of these early meetings within

individual homes, the church experienced potential opportunities to extend spiritual

blessings to those within their community of faith. Filson identifies early elements of

worship, and the fellowship meal within community life as important. In addition,

essential components of ecclesia for the First Century followers were not introduced

by primarily attending special events with special buildings culturally associated with

religious life. The house church with adequate space included meals with their

meeting, as well as regular participation in the Eucharist. Naturally, the home

provided a special environment for sacred forms of Christian community and

worship. It is also important to consider that the consistent practice of theology

within the homes of the early believers not only strengthened the community of faith, but also family relationships. The regular practice of community, worship, and the Lord's Supper must have provided a forum for families to rediscover God's original intent.

Within the current culture, individual homes continue to provide a forum for developing theology through essential experiences gained in the house church. The home becomes a sanctuary where individuals are blessed and develop through the establishment of community. The reality of God's sacred presence in various avenues of life is made available for participants and the spiritual life becomes holistic and relational. Ultimately, the house church within the current context has the potential to further personalize the orthodoxy that is often embraced in the Christian faith, when orthopraxy is brought home and experienced in community.

2) The house churches structure provides a partial explanation of the great attention paid to the family life in the letters of Paul and in other Christian writings. Within the primitive church, it is safe to assume that the relational paradigm of both Jew and Gentile, master and slave, husband and wife, father and child participated in the regular meetings. Throughout his writings, Paul emphasized these essential connections and provided a vision for relational harmony that was also associated with the spiritual life. In addition, the environment of the house church provided an experimental laboratory for these essential relationships to develop. Paul recognized the importance of establishing reconciled relationships for the glory of God's Kingdom and the potential impact throughout the world.

It is critical to remember that the original intent of the church is not about

worship services and buildings; the church is about people together discovering a

daily journey with God. Much of the relationship experienced with others is a

reflection of the personal relationship with God. The expression of house church

within homes identifies the concept of a spiritual family. Within the spiritual journey,

it is important to experience mutual encouragement and support. In addition, the

house church provides a forum of accountability for individuals to practice relational

unity. In contrast, many individuals within the current church culture abandon the

idea of individual development and personal accountability and identify spirituality

based upon attending a religious gathering. Although not perfect, the house church

provides a stable opportunity to oversee relational development throughout the

journey.

　　　　3) The existence of several house churches in one city goes helps identify the

tendency to congregational division within the apostolic age. Filson's primary point

at this stage is that the multiplicity of house churches generated unbalanced structure

that in many situations ultimately created disunity within the apostolic church. Filson

further explains that the natural tendency of humanity is to join together with those of

close association. This single point is often the case with groups politically,

religiously, and socially. Therefore this could potentially explain the often-noted

relational discourse that Paul combated throughout his writings.

　　　　Another important point that should be added to this overall section is that

diversity is important to the Christian faith and has the potential to strengthen the

orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the spiritual journey. The tendency of humanity is to

connect with those of close association. From this perspective, we limit potential

relational unity that can be experienced under God's hand of reconciliation. The tendency for many segments of the church is to become separatists forming individual clubs only allowing other like-minded participants into the club. Diversity can potentially strengthen theology by individually experiencing personal discomfort. Fresh perspectives can be gained within the group and the overall Kingdom can be strengthened by the beautiful diversity that God originally created.

Nevertheless, the tendency for many is to become fearful and withdrawn. At times the early church was weakened and their message was hampered due to the turmoil of their disunity. As participants deconstructing the past, it is imperative not to become overcome by the divisive issues of diversity but seek unity in Christ, embrace reconciliation, and to focus on the overall goal of proclaiming the message of salvation. The house church structure continues to provide a platform to accomplish this task.

4) A study of the social situation associated with house churches helps identify the social status of the early Christians. The notable work of the apostle Paul and his personal experiences identifies that the early church was socially mixed. Filson identifies that a large portion of the under-privileged greatly contributed to the overall population of the early Christian communities but the established institution was socially diverse. Furthermore, the house church provided the early missionary with an avenue to extend his message to entire the household. This method became a common strategy as Paul traveled from town to town. Filson ultimately concludes that historically, the homes associated with the early movement were large enough to host multiple families so Christian history should properly recognize the validity of

the socially mixed church.

Although strategically seeking out large homes to provide a meeting place may not have been part of Paul's overall strategy, however, like the early church embracing God's strategy for redemption of humanity can only strengthen the Christian community within the current culture. Understanding that all of humanity suffers from the power of sin and all are in need of redemption should impact the orthodoxy of the gathered community regardless of the location of the meeting. Again, the house church continues to provide a creative forum to motivate, encourage, and support the continued mission of the early church.

5) The development of church polity can never be understood without reference to the house churches. The strength of this section as developed by Filson is that the house church provided a context for the development of leaders to continue the movement following the apostolic leaders. In addition, he asserts that inevitably, these leaders must have had some form of education, as well as administrative ability, to accomplish the tack of church leadership. However the early disciples serve as a reminder that the spiritual character of an individual, as well as the personal call, should serve as the primary gauge for leadership within the church.

Filson also claims that some of the leaders were initially identified as "God-fearers" and were familiar with the cost of taking risk. At this point Filson, could have also added the development of women within the early house church community. Indeed, connected with the theology, Christianity gave both women and slaves a new status, and many opportunities to participate in the ministry and mission of the early community. However, in other forms of religious life throughout the

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ancient world, women were treated as second class and group participation was limited. In addition, those in the Jewish faith belittled slaves and mocked their social status. Perhaps it was in the house church under the banner of hospitality where the theology and practice of equality started developing.

All of these factors may have contributed to the development of polity within the early church but the notable premise applicable for the current context is the establishment of a training ground for leaders within a house church setting. When properly utilized, the house church has the potential to provide special training for those involved with group life. Obviously, leaders are placed in a natural situation to exhibit leadership, but others within the group experience opportunities to exhibit and develop their spiritual gifts as well. Within a properly functioning house church community, individual needs are identified and the community operates together to meet the various concerns. As a result, community truly functions as a body and the ecclesia is strengthened. Individuals feel an affinity with the group and connected with the overall vision of contributing to the advancement of God's Kingdom.

Recognize and Respond to Postmodern influence

In the midst of one of the greatest transitions in history-from modernity to postmodern-Christian churches are owned lock, stock, and barrel by modernity.
George Marsden –Evangelism in modern America

If we do not understand the forces of change, we will be overwhelmed by them
Mike Regele –The Death of the Church

How did we get here?

Bronze age

Middle age

Enlightenment

Modernity

Postmodernism

The world in which we live…

For the church, it is important to understand that engagement with postmodernity is not the same as acceptance of postmodernism. Our primary concern-a concern that none of us can afford to evade-must be to understand postmodernity as a description of the time in which we live
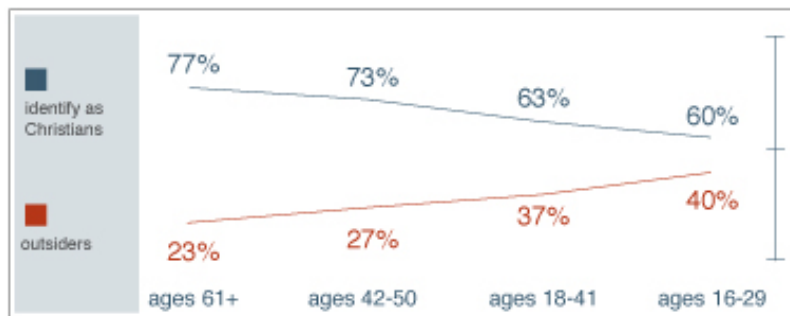
Gerard Kelly –Retro Future

George Barna (**www.barna.org**) states that

o *Those in the ages 16- to 29-year-olds exhibit a greater degree of criticism toward Christianity than did previous generations when they were at the same stage of life*

o *16% of non-Christians in their late teens and twenties said they have a "good impression" of Christianity.*

o *Common negative perceptions among young non-Christians include:*
   ▪ **Christianity is judgmental (87%)**
   ▪ **hypocritical (85%)**
   ▪ **old-fashioned (78%)**
   ▪ **too involved in politics (75%)**

**The Proportion of those "Outside"
Christianity is Growing with Each Generation**

Modern versus Postmodern

Modern Values	*Postmodern Values*
Rational: A key Enlightenment concept based upon human reason to comprehend universal truths, this is achieved through the discipline of science or the practice of scientific method.	*Experiential*: Knowledge is gained through the experience of things rather than the development of knowledge based disciplines. Postmoderns are into the pursuit of experience
Scientific: A system of acquiring or developing knowledge based on scientific research. Scientism has become a common component of the current culture. Scientists have been common promoters of this worldview.	*Spiritual*: Spiritual is a common component within a postmodern context. Within this perception individual elevate the importance of life seeking to identify and understand the deeper questions of life. People pursue spirituality by developing a holistic approach to life.
Unanimity: The undisputed state of complete agreement within a group. People groups seek to be homogeneous, rather than multicultural. Within this paradigm religious options are narrow.	*Pluralistic*: The acknowledgement and pursuit of diversity. As a result spirituality is multifaceted, and often has little to do with believing in God. As Jones observes, technology has made "everything available to everyone," and religiously the "choices are overwhelming."
Exclusive: The practice of identifying and opposing areas of contention between associated belief patterns. Religious exclusivism identifies areas of opposition.	*Relative*: A perspective on religious pluralism that ultimately leads people to think that "all faiths contain elements of truth and any religion is a perfectly good way to express your spirituality."
Egocentric: A deep concern with the individual perspective as opposed to the concern over society. Many Modern philosophers stressed the importance of the self. "Culturally, this view gave birth to the name the "Me" generation for the Boomers, with an emphasis focused on the ultimate state of self-fulfillment.	*Altruistic*: A selfless concern for the welfare of others. Jones notes an important paradox – "The Millenial generation seem to be even more "consumeristic" than their parents, yet they also highly value giving away their time and resources."
Individualistic: The pursuit of self-reliance and freedom for the individual. The practice is identified with a heavy emphasis upon self-fulfillment. Common marketing efforts target the individual consumer.	*Communal*: A pursuit of community and deeper association with the family. Postmoderns are non traditional in their pursuit of deeper community. Common media outlets that identify this perspective are TV shows such as *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, and *Friends*.

Functional: An emphasis within modern context to identify usefulness in order to serve a purpose. For instance, "the worship center replaced the sanctuary."	*Creative*: Jones observes that "Gen-Xers and Yers are known for their aesthetic sensibilities." The perceived notion associated with beauty for its own sake is of great value.
Industrial: The specific goal associated with the industrial age identified the "efficiency and material bounty." In addition machines were highly valued for their ability to contribute.	*Environmental*: A response to exploitation of the Earth's varied resources. Individuals are greatly concerned with the environment long-term viability of the Earth's resources.
Local: Peoples' interests are primarily local, despite transportation and the greater need of improvement. "Youth group overseas missionary trips were uncommon and individual communication with missionaries was limited to snail mail."	*Global*: Jones writes: "With no major wars or economic depressions to unite us, students believe they're citizens of the world, and their loyalties may be stronger to the entire human race than they are to nations. CNN and the Internet only strengthen this conviction."

Material from Tony Jones

What shall we do?

Principles from the past…

o *Mission Starts with God*

God is a sending God with a desire to see humankind and creation reconciled, redeemed, and healed.

Frost and Hirsch –The Shaping of Things to Come

Historical understanding of Missio Dei – "God's mission in Christ"

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

- o *Ethical Standards based on profession of faith*

…true piety came to be seen as residing in faith and good conduct, over and above practices; it aimed to mobilize the entire domain of the self in obedience to God's will.

Gerard Vallee –The shaping of Christianity

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- o *Salvation available to all*

Acts 4:12

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

What shall we say?

This hunger for spirituality does not today, perhaps for the first time in many centuries, cause people to come to the churches. If… we live in the midst of a time of genuine spiritual search analogous of the Great Awakening, how do we communicate the riches of our spiritual heritage to a generation not interested in being in communication with what churches do?

Sheffield, U.K. –The Nine O'Clock Community

Pathways to the present…

The longer a person lives, the more he or she tends to dwell on the past rather than live in a dynamic interaction with the present or be inspired by the hope of future possibilities.

Eddie Gibbs –Church Next

Diversity within the community

Galatians 3:27-29

…for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Altruistic

In congregations in which leaders do support community ministry, the research identified five basic categories of support:

- o *Educating: It is important to Provide a biblical/theological rationale for community ministry, specifically identifying problems and needs within the community, identifying an reflecting on past community ministry experiences, identify connections between faith and community ministry, assist people with interpreting their community ministry experiences within a Christian framework.*

- *Informing: Announcing within the group specific needs and opportunities for involvement within community ministry.*

- *Promoting: Encouraging participation in and supporting community ministries, matching and recruiting individuals for particular ministry activities, arrange opportunities for volunteers to share about their experiences, and modeling specific involvement.*

- *Supporting: Regular prayer for community ministries (including various volunteers and recipients of ministry), providing opportunities for fund raisin for and/or contributing congregational finances toward a local ministry, and recognizing, affirming participation in community ministry, and holding people accountable for following through with their commitments to various ministries.*

- *Initiating: Initiating involvement, taking the responsibility to make or respond to contacts with other organizations, and assimilating planning groups within the organization.*

The Impact of Volunteering on Christian Faith and Congregational Life

Diana Garland, Dennis Myers, Terry Wolfer

Community

Although the gospel comes to us personally, God's purposes for creation find their fulfillment not in the formation of an aggregate of 'saved' individuals but in a community of reconciled people. Consequently, the Spirit's task is to bring into being a new community…

Grenz –Beyond Foundationalism

Colossians 2:2

My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ.

A new front door… (Church Planter / Core Group Activity)

Web (re)Design / Kick-Off Meetings

Site purpose / vision
    o What is the purpose of the site / what is the problem we are trying to solve?
For example: establish online presence for branding / credibility; provide public information / education; sell products or services; create a community; provide customer service; lead generation; portfolio
    o What are the goals of the site? What do we want visitors to accomplish while on the site?
    o What implicit message should the site convey? XYZ is here to...
    o What explicit message(s) should the site convey (taglines, verbiage from other collateral)?
    o What characteristics/attributes/attitude should the site convey to users?
    o What feelings or metaphors reflect the spirit of your organization?
    o What is the role of the site: passive (we refer people to) / active (first impression before people contact us)?
    o What is the tone? Who is the voice of the site? What does the site stand for?

Success criteria / goals
    o How would you define a successful Web site for your organization?
    o What does success look like: how will you know when the Web site is successful?
    o How would you describe the site from the organization's perspective?
    o How would you describe the site from the users' perspective?
    o What emotional result / benefit should the users get? What is the one emotional feature users can latch on to?

Expectations / Requirements / Preferences
    o Describe your initial view of the project. What do you think the project should entail?
    o What prompted the redesign?
    o Are there any constraints, mandates, policies, or guidelines for the site?

Audience definition
    o Who are the users of the site? Are there primary / secondary / tertiary audiences?
    o How would you describe the users?
Basic demographics: Age; Education; Location; Occupation; Relationship (general public, students, legislators, donors, customers); Gender ratio; Level of technical experience; Nationality; Psychological demographic; Lifestyle preferences; Other info?
    o What are the interests and needs of the users: why will they come to the site?
    o When and where will users access the site (i.e. user environment and context: shop floor, from the office, in Starbucks, from a public kiosk in a hotel)?
    o How will users access the site (user computer settings: WiFi, high speed, dial   up, with a cellphone)?

Task analysis and prioritization
    o What will users do on the site (tasks / content / features)?
    o How often will users frequent your Web site?

o How long do we want users to hang around on the site?
o What will compel users to return to your Web site?

Usability
o Criticality: which tasks are critical to users' success on the Web site?
o Criticality: which tasks are critical to the organization's success on the Web site?
o Importance: which tasks are most important to users?
o Frequency: which features of the site will users use the most?
o Efficacy: which tasks should users be able to finish quickly?
o Efficiency: which tasks should users be able to accomplish with few errors?
o Vulnerability: which features are prone to usability issues?
o Satisfaction: what level of satisfaction should users have after using the site?

Accessibility
o Does the existing site comply with Section 508 / ADA accessibility guidelines?
o Is the site color scheme and contrast level color   blind accessible?
o What type of accessibility testing has been done?
o What types of accessibility tools are available?

Discuss initial technology needs
o Are there any special hosting needs?
o Do we need a new domain name?
o Should the site be configured for analytics (Omniture, Google)?
o Is there search functionality available (CMS   based, Google   based)?
o Are there any special features that need to be part of the site: photo gallery or portfolio / discussion board or forum / blog / wiki / password   protected pages / online polls / event calendar / newsletter or e   mail opt   in / order forms
o Does the site need to share data, or integrate with, any external data sources?

Resources / Contacts
o Is there existing content that can be re   purposed?
o Are there supporting elements from previous / future marketing or branding (logos, business cards / letterhead, brochures, print ads, TV ads)?
o What new content is needed (copy, photography, graphic elements)?
o Are there any sites to model / examples of style or overall look? What about those sites do you like?
o Who will be responsible for updating and maintaining the site?
o How often will the site be updated?
o Who will be the key point of contact?
o Is there a separate contact for technical issues? Content issues? Accessibility issues?

Timeline and Project Plan
o Are there time constraints?
　　o Site must be live by...
　　o Information gathering must start before...
o Is there an outsourcing budget?

Incorporate "Missional" into the Life of the Community

> The church does not have a mission. …It is God who has a mission and the missionary of God is the Holy Spirit. The questions is whether the mission of God has a church
>
> *Leonard Sweet –Reclaiming a missional theology*

So what's the big deal with missional?

1907 Oxford English Dictionary – Related to or connected with a religious mission; missionary

1907 W.G Holmes – "Several prelates whose missional activities brought over whole districts and even nationalities to their creed."

1976 J.R Nelson - In fairness to John Wesley, it can be presumed that in his self-awareness as a virtually monarchical of the movement he was guided by his missional principles

Darrell Guder, in his 1988 book *The Church as Missional Community* stated he must be held accountable, it appears, for the rapid spread of the term *missional* in many circles of discussion dealing with the situation of the church in North America.

Southern Baptist Convention - A biblically faithful and culturally-appropriate reproducing community of disciples sent on mission by God to advance his Kingdom among all peoples

First Century examples of missional church planting…

Acts 8:4-8

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

- o *Relationship between Jews and Samaritans*
- o *The missional behavior of Philip*
- o *The missional message of Philip*

It is the Samaritan mission, not the Gentile mission, that primarily marks a decisive turning point in the development of the early church, as the former paves way for the later. Though it is unorganized from a human point of view, it is rooted in the authority of Jesus, commissioned by the risen Lord, confirmed by the descent of the Holy Spirit and sanctioned by the apostolic involvement. It is portrayed as equally valid with the Jewish mission and is organized out of the divine context of persecution and as the fulfillment of the prophetic and eschatological hope of reunion and restoration.

V.J. Samkutty -Samaritan Mission in Acts

Acts 11:19-24

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

- o *Relationship between Jews and Gentiles*
- o *Missional behavior of Barnabas*
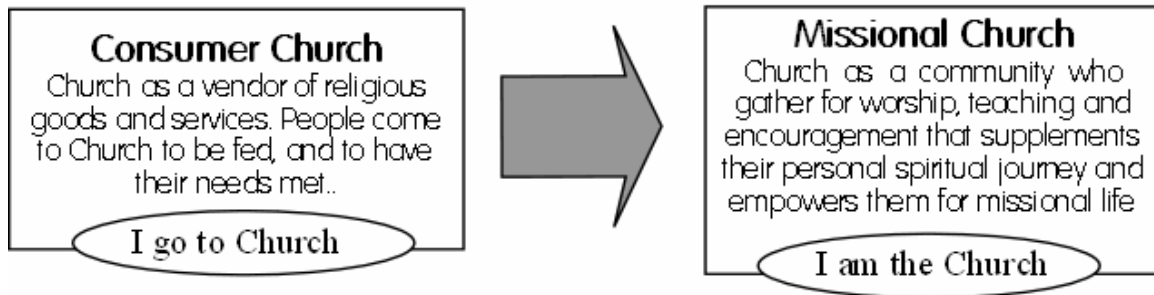- o *Missional message in Antioch*

Acts 13:1-3

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The founding of the Antioch church may be the most important moment in church planting history. ... Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Antioch church became the first great missionary sending church

Ed Stetzer

From Consumer-driven to Missional living

The Shift from Consumer Church to Missional Church

Consumer Church
Church as a vendor of religious goods and services. People come to Church to be fed, and to have their needs met..

I go to Church

Missional Church
Church as a community who gather for worship, teaching and encouragement that supplements their personal spiritual journey and empowers them for missional life

I am the Church

Friends of Missional –A discovery of the Missional Church

Missional principles of the First Century church

Hoy Spirit dependent

The New Testament emphasizes the fundamental identity and purpose of the church as the people of God. This peoplehood is what the Holy Spirit uses to give life and move the church forward. The church cannot exist without institutional arrangements, but it is the Spirit alone who gives the people of God life and renews them in their identity and purpose.

Wilbert Shenk –Write the Vision

Kingdom Growth

Questions that must be considered include:
- o Do we have a vision for multiplication?
- o How is the church involved in church planting, missions, ministry and evangelism?
- o Do we network with other churches within our city

- How does the church empower and train individuals to be on mission?
- Does the church have a strategy for becoming a multiplying community of faith?

The major reason church reproduction has not been envisioned for Western contexts is simply because the church is still captive to the Christendom paradigm.
It still considers Western society as basically "churched." There is virtually no attempt to apply principles of group conversions, people movements and spontaneous church planting in Western cultures. The current emphasis continues to be on building bigger and bigger institutions instead. Since organic reproduction is not valued, there is no expectation for it. "Spontaneous" church reproduction in Western contexts is almost exclusively limited to church splits

Jonathan Stewart Campbell –The Translatability of Christian Community

Missionary DNA

The early was established and organized with a world-wide mission for a world-wide work… for every member was potentially a missionary… With the activity of its members it simply grew by multiplying its Bishops.

Allen Roland –Spontaneous Expansion

We have become a society that 50 years ago every denomination would have felt compelled to missionize.

Tom Clegg

Mission is the whole church brining the whole Christ to the whole world

-Unknown

Think Missionally
From: A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture. Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Post-National – The move toward globalization and multiculturalism
- Post-Rational – The embrace of contradiction and paradox
- Post-Literal – The interest in story and myth

- Post-Scientific/Technological – The need for silence, reflection and mystery
- Post-Sexual – seeing the tension in sexuality / new honesty
- Post-Racial – Fewer lines of distinction as we recognize the primacy of culture, not race
- Post-Human – gives rise to the primacy of authenticity
- Post-Traumatic/Therapeutic – Developing a theology of suffering
- Post-Ethical/Institutional – Growing cynicism means we cannot take ourselves too seriously
- Post-Christian – balanced by the growth of a new interest in spirituality

Leaders for a new generation

Essential leadership characteristics in a post-protestant era

Thinking-out-of-the-box

Today's leaders feel, think, and act differently than leaders of the past. They are gripped by a different view of reality. They see what most people cannot or will not see… Their comments and actions often scare people who have not assumed the mantle of leadership or who lead by control or rules. In every respect, today's leaders are very different from most leaders throughout the history of Christendom.

Bill Easum –Leadership on the Other Side

Areas to consider…

- Engaging the community
- Leadership development
- Structural consistency

Developing a team around the mission

I frankly confess that our greatest mistake has probably been doing too much of the work ourselves, instead of training others to do it and working through them…. For the ultimate establishing of the church, and to meet the demands of the age, we must have workmen thoroughly equipped

Daniel McGilvary –Missionary to Tahiland
- o Understand the specific about the mission
- o Include others in the process
- o Make sure the team understands the specifics
- o Stay consistent with your communication

Equipping individuals through spiritual development

- o Spiritual development is holistic
- o Spiritual development within the community
- o Spiritual development discovering ancient practices
- o Spiritual development through personal experience

The role of pastors will be remolded according to a more biblical perspective. We'll become postpragmatists, no longer driven by the so-called "proven methods" that promise success in the consumer driven church business. After we realize that there's more to ministry than finding and employing the proper techniques, we'll repent of our reliance on them and learn to rest again in our dependence on God. We'll learn to become equippers rather than program managers.

-Reclaiming God's original intent for the Church

Rethinking Structure

Structures per se are time-bound. Invariably structures undergo change in response to the environment, which itself is continually changing. Those that do not prove flexible and adaptable are soon regarded as obsolete and must be discarded. But the process is never easy. Enormous resources can be used up in defending and preserving archaic structures. The church, like all human enterprises, readily looks to its structures to ensure the continuity of the faith.

Wilbert Shenk –Write the Vision

How did they start?

The New Testament Church would be better understood, if more attention were paid to the actual physical conditions under which the first Christians met and lived. In particular, the importance and function of the house church should be carefully considered.

Floyd Filson –The Significances of the Early House Churches

It was the Gentiles who took a Greek translation of the word Messiah, and used the word Christian to indicate the followers of Christ as associated with this term

Cwiekowski –The Beginnings of the Church

First Century Strategy…

Association with the synagogue

- o **Houses of prayer (beth tefilah)**

- o **Houses of study (beth midrash)**

With notable exception of the pre-70 Jerusalem Temple, the synagogue encapsulated Jewish communal life within its walls – the political, liturgical, social, educational, judicial, and spiritual.

Lee I Levine -The Ancient Synagogue

Missionary-Network

Acts 11:19-24

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Acts 13:1-3

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

House to house influence

With the exception of such limited use as could be made of the market place and other public areas of the city, the regular setting for both Christian meeting and evangelistic preaching was found in the homes of believers.

Floyd Filson –The Significances of the Early House Churches

- o Separation between Judaism and Christianity
- o Development of local leadership
- o Natural environment for the presentation of Christian message

What were the effects?

5 Implications of early church structure

1. The house church provided a forum for the followers of Jesus to develop a distinctive Christian worship and fellowship during the first days of the apostolic age.

2. The house churches structure provides a partial explanation of the great attention paid to the family life in the letters of Paul and in other Christian writings.

3. The existence of several house churches in one city goes helps identify the tendency to congregational division within the apostolic age.

4. A study of the social situation associated with house churches helps identify the social status of the early Christians.

5. The development of church polity can never be understood without reference to the house churches

How do we make the shift?

- o **Make prayer the first priority**
- o **Identify specifics concerning your context and mission field**
- o **Educate your team concerning changes within the culture**
- o **Together seek out similarities with the First Century Church**
- o **Create consistency between Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy**

Example Copy for discussion with core group

Constitution for the Journey

1100 East Boal Ave, Boalsburg PA, 16827

1. Article 1 - Name
   1. The Journey
2. Article 2 - Address
   1. 1100 East Boal Ave, Boalsburg PA, 16827
3. Article 3 – Incorporators
   1. Billy Harmon, 1047 Saxton Drive, State College PA, 16801
   2. Hartley Kinsey, 103 Cherry Ridge Road, State College PA, 16803
4. Article 4 – Trustees – The major legal / financial affairs of the Corporation shall be managed by the board of trustees, hereinafter referred to as the trustees, whose members shall have fiduciary obligations to the Corporation.
   1. The trustees are to provide counsel to the senior pastor regarding the major legal / financial affairs of the Journey.
   2. A meeting of the trustees shall be held at least twice a year. The senior pastor or any trustee may call a meeting at any time, under the condition that a majority of the trustees attend the meeting.
   3. Trustees will normally serve for a period of fourteen months.
   4. At any meeting of the trustees, any person may participate in the meeting by telephone provided everyone can hear and speak to each other.
5. Article 5 - Purpose
   1. To exist as a Missional Christian Community who seek to reconcile people with the love of God. This corporation is a nonprofit religious corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. In addition this community is associated with the Mideast Baptist Conference of the Baptist General Conference and the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania and South Jersey of the Southern Baptist Convention.
6. Article 6 – Community Participants
   1. An individual becomes a Community Participant by completing a general course designed to introduce the Community Life at the Journey.
   2. Be one who seeks to live life with God.
   3. Be one who seeks to understand what it means to live a life consistent with the generous orthodoxy, ancient creeds and Scriptures of the Christian church.
   4. Seek reconciliation with the people of the Journey community.

Seek to live a reconciled life with all of mankind.

7. Article 7 - Membership / Covenant Participants
    1. "Members of The Journey are called "Covenant Participants. Covenant Participants carry the constitutional responsibilities of The Journey.
    2. Covenant Participants are a subset of Community Participants. A Covenant Participant must be a Community Participant in good standing.
    3. Covenant Participants are approved by the Leadership team and affirmed by Covenant Participants. In addition they must complete a course that identifies Covenant life at the Journey.
    4. If possible a Covenant participant must seek to be involved with a Life on Life group. The Life on Life groups are a network of house churches associated with the Journey.
    5. Covenant Participants – Criteria for Covenant Participants
        1. New believer be a Community Participant in good standing for at least 6 months.
        2. Transferring into Covenant as a mature follower of Christ must fulfill requirements of intro to Covenant community and recommended by the Leadership team following at least three months of community participation.
        3. Identify with the life of Christ and the ancient Christian church through the act of baptism.
        4. Demonstrate a desire to participate in the ongoing duties of Covenant participants.
        5. If possible seek to participate in the Annual meeting.
        6. Involvement in the life of the Journey including Prayer, Participation and Finances.
        7. Invest in the ministry and dreams of the Journey.
        8. Be at least 18 years of age.
    6. Role of Covenant Participants
        1. Give approval of single budget expense item increase over 40% or a combination of budget expense increases over 20% of the overall budget.
        2. Give approval of acquisition of debt in excess of 10% of the annual budget.
        3. When necessary at the annual meeting give approval of overall budget increase in excess of 25% of previous years income
        4. Affirm new Covenant participants.
        5. Affirm new Leadership participants.

Vote for hiring of the Lead Pastor. When voting on the hiring of the Lead Pastor a quorum will consist of 75% of Covenant participants as outlined in article 6.

6. A quorum for the annual meeting will consist of 60% of Covenant participants as outlined in article 6.
7. All votes for a lead pastor require a 75% affirmative from the stated quorum of Covenant participants to pass. All other votes require 70% affirmative from the stated quorum of Covenant participants to pass.
7. Covenant Participants normally will be added twice per year with the recommendation of the Leadership team and the affirmation of the current Covenant Participants.
8. Removal of Covenant and Community Participants
   1. The Leadership team either at the request of the Participant or at the Covenant / Community Participant's failure to uphold their agreement and responsibilities as outlined in Article 6 and Article 7 will remove participants. The Leadership team will seek to notify individuals of this decision.
8. Article 8 - Leadership team / elders – The elders are to serve the congregation and the senior pastor for the development of the spiritual life of the church. These leaders and their spouses are to help create a positive environment that enables spiritual development throughout the Journey.
   1. Criteria For Leadership Participants
      1. Be Covenant Participants in good standing.
      2. Demonstrate leadership consistent with the Biblical and Historical church example.
      3. Be approved by the existing Leadership team.
      4. Be willing and able to serve the Journey without reservations.
      5. The Leadership Group will normally consist of a minimum of 3 people. Additional leaders will be added according to the growth needs of this organization. The maximum number of people associated with the Leadership team will not exceed 12.
      6. Each person with the exception of the Lead Pastor will be reviewed for continuation of their Leadership position at the beginning of each calendar year.
   2. Responsibilities Of Leadership Participants
      1. Issues of overall church matters of direction and emphasis
      2. Approve invitation of Covenant participants into the Covenant life of the Journey.
      3. Finances and in establishing and implementation of budget. When appropriate receive counsel from the trustees.
      4. Provide oversight of current staff and hiring of new staff

Appoint trustees according to the growth needs of Covenant participants.

      5. The Lead Pastor shall always be participant of the Leadership team accept when issues pertaining to his staff position arise. In such cases the Leadership team will refer to the chairman as their moderator.

6. Leadership team shall call meetings necessary for Voting Participants to vote on pertinent issues in a way that allows for reconciled living among the participants
   3. Removal of a Leadership Participant - Should anyone in the Covenant community, Leadership, or staff, bring an accusation of serious concern, charging that the one in question is not fit to serve in the Leadership; a review panel will be developed to review the allegations. The review panel will consist of five members that can be selected from the staff, Leadership team, or trustees. The Lead pastor will serve as the moderator of the panel providing guidance for the process unless issues related to the Lead pastor as identified in article 8.2.6.
9. Article 9 - Finances
   1. The Journey will base its budget on income of the previous year. Budget increase of more than 25% of previous year's giving will require Covenant Participant approval as stated in article 7.6.
   2. The Journey will conduct an audit each calendar year.
   3. Budgets and expenditure recaps will be made publicly available.
10. Article 10 – Property
    1. All property, real or personal shall remain with those whom abide by this set of Bylaws as determined by the Leadership Team.
    2. On the dissolution of the corporation, all assets remaining after payment of, or provision for payment of, all debts and liabilities of this corporation, shall be distributed to Calvary Baptist Church of State College, PA or in such case that Calvary Baptist Church no longer exist, a nonprofit that is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes and affiliated with either the Baptist General Conference or the Southern Baptist Convention.
11. Article 11 – Limited Liability
    1. The incorporators, trustees, Leadership team, Covenant and Community Participants of the Corporation shall not be personally liable for the debts and obligations of the Corporation or of each other.
12. Article 12 - Amendments
    1. These Bylaws may be altered, amended or replaced, and new Bylaws may be adopted, by the Leadership team at any regular meeting. When changing issues associated with the legal articles the Leadership team must seek counsel from the trustees. At least five days advanced written notice shall be given to the trustees explaining the proposed changes.

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VITA

William J. Harmon was born on February 19, 1968 in Chester, South Carolina. Reverend Harmon received a B.A. degree from Erskine College, Due West, South Carolina, in 1991and the M.Div. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, TX in 1994, and he participated in the D.Min. program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary from 2001 to May 2008. He served as pastor of Burchill Baptist Church in Fort Worth, TX from 1992 to 1994 and pastor of Union Road Baptist Church in Gastonia, NC from 1995 to 2000 and served as the founding pastor of The Journey in State College, PA from 2001 to the present. He is married to the former Amanda Gayle Arant and has three children, Hannah, Ashlynn, and Joshua.